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A. AUFFRAY S.D.B.

SAINT JOHN BOSCO

" Give me souls — The rest matters nothing "

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INTRODUCTION

" How can I do this, when I am only a poor ignorant boy... ? "

" Don't worry, I will give you someone to show you and teach you, and you will see that everything will be possible..."

At that moment I saw beside me a beautiful lady whose garments reflected points of light like a thousand stars... she took me by the hand and said, " Look..."

I saw that in place of the boys there were a lot of wild little animals snapping and snarling at each other...

" This is your work," she said, " make yourself humble and strong. What you see going to happen now is what you must do..."

I looked and I saw that the snarling animals had been changing into frollicking lambs, chasing each other and jumping about for joy... I sighed once again and the Lady put her hand on my head and said sweetly, " Don't worry, in good time you will understand everything."

The situation which faced nine year old John Bosco in the first of the many dreams about his work which he had, is that which faces everyone, priest, parent, teacher, who is faced with the education and care of the young. It is a very difficult task and the thought certainly comes — " How can I manage it ? "

The answer is that the way St. John Bosco was taught by Our Blessed Lady is the way for all those who have to deal with children — priests, parents, teachers, youth leaders, scout leaders, anyone. How completely St. John Bosco assimilated the teaching of Our Lady is shown in this life.

It will be noticed how he kept on learning all his life and this is one of the great secrets of education — that we never stop learning. We have to keep on learning anew and understanding at an ever deeper level.

Sometimes we may feel if only we could be sure we were going about it the right way. You can be perfectly sure that Don Bosco's way is the right way: it comes to him from Our Lady, the mother and teacher of Jesus, God and man, who understands human nature and its needs as no other human being ever has, and whose desire for the childrens' development and growth in Christ moves her continually to encourage and inspire us in the education of her children.

We can be sure that St. John Bosco's way is the right way, also because it has the infallible seal of the Church in the canonisation of Dominic Savio, the only schoolboy saint in the church and pupil of Don Bosco. St. John Bosco set out consciously to lead Dominic to heroic heights through the things of boy's life by setting him to transform the schoolboy environment as he found it, to gain ascendancy over his companions so that they were drawn to follow him. In doing this he ran fast on the road to sanctity — to complete living for God, and this is the way for our children today.

No one need fear that it does not work in the difficulties of today — it is made for the difficulties so great and so worrying, which are met today in the education of the young.

The time has gone when the children could get by with the pattern we sought to impose on them from without; we need to develope and form them from within so that from their earliest years they will take their place beside us in resisting evil and doing good, establishing Christ's Kingdom in the hearts of all.

This establishing of a partnership between himself and the young is one of the great secrets of Don Bosco's success. This is something we have to learn today more than ever. It is the gateway to all the rest.

A great need for all those engaged with the young is inspiration. Here, in the life of St. John Bosco, it is in plenty. There is, however, not only inspiration, but also instruction.

We have had this life by Father Auffray S.D.B., reprinted as it is not only a biography but sets out also to study the ideas and method of the Saint, and to show them in practice. We have also kept the price very low for a book of this size, so that it may spread far and wide.

TERENCE O'BRIEN S.D.B.

A wonderful and harassed vocation

To the east of Turin, in the triangle enclosed between it and Alessandria, the Po and its plentiful tributary the Tanaro, stretches one of the most fertile districts of northern Italy, Upper Monferrato. A land of gentle undulating hills, never rising over sixteen or seventeen hundred feet, at the foot of which lie smiling in the sunshine the little valleys that spread out into the vast plain of the Po. Viewed from above this region looks like a row of huge molehills rising close together in an immense fertile field. On these mounds ripen the great wines of Italy: the foaming *asti,* the rough and flinty flavoured *barbera,* and the small sweet muscat, with all the fragrance of its fruit. On all the slopes there are nothing but vines and mulberry-trees; but lower down, on the plain, are rich meadows where disport the cattle which have not yet started for the Alps, and infinite crops of wheat and maize and oats and rye. The richness of the land instinctively reminds one of the Cote-d'or, the aspect, the produce and the sun of which it possesses.

Its teeming population lives by agricultural labour, and the villages crowd close together, sometimes clinging to the hill-sides, sometimes extending freely along the hollows of the low ground. If you cross the country on a warm evening in July between the harvest lying on the field and the vines ripening for the vintage, it gives you an impression of joyous prosperity. The sun smiles upon the yellowing maize, the vines stand heavily laden with their bunches of grapes, the corn-stacks dot the ground with their great white splashes, whilst, in the peace of

eventide, the reapers and haymakers chant in three parts some old romance of love.

On the threshold of this district, after passing Chieri, about twelve miles from Turin, the pedestrian encounters a sturdy hill surmounted and completely covered by a market-town, Castelnuovo d'Asti. The ruins of a feudal manor crown its summit, and on either side, on ascending the tortuous rustic streets, you see the remnants of the old fortifications cropping up. Castelnuovo had to undergo more than one siege in the middle ages, during the days of the League of Lombardy and in the time of the Guelfs and Ghibelines.

It is famous in our own days for the birth of two saints, St. Joseph Cafasso and St. John Bosco.

Strictly speaking, it was not at Catselnuovo d'Asti that the latter first saw the light. His parents lived in a little hamlet — called Becchi — about three miles from Castelnuovo, in the village of Murialdo, depending upon the borough and parish of Castelnuovo.

It was on August 16, 1815 that he was born of Francis Louis Bosco and Margaret Occhiena his wife, and next day he was baptised John Melchior. His father was a jobber, who worked for the support of his family. The sun shone upon a few acres of his land as well as his cottage; but they were not enough to provide for the six mouths of his household; for the humble roof of Becchi had to shelter, in addition to his septuagenarian mother, his wife, his seven-year-old son by his first wife, named Anthony, and the two boys, Joseph and John, the sons of Margaret Occhiena. Happily Bosco and his wife were young — he was thirty-one and she twenty-seven — and they were not afraid of work. Despite the hard times, they therefore managed to live.

Becchi scattered their eight or ten hearths along the ridge of one of those slight waves of ground that rib the plain beyond Chieri. A few farm-labourers' cottages, the villa of a pretty well-to-do country landowner, a few fields running down the slopes, a common kiln in front of the group of houses, and, as far as the eye could see, a flock of hills covered with thick copses, a safe shelter for the deserters of Napoleon's armies: such was the aspect of the village. Opposite, on a tongue of land which cuts off the horizon to the east, the belfry of Buttigliera dominates the landscape like a finger pointing heavenwards.

A lovely setting, in which all this brood of honest folk could have lived a happy life, had not misfortune within two years befallen the young household.

One May evening, after a day of hard work had made him perspire profusely, Francis Bosco was foolish enough to go into the cellar of the neighbouring landowner for whom he worked. He came out of it with a violent attack of pneumonia, which killed him within four days. It was the earliest and most sorrowful memory of Don Bosco's childhood. Later on, thirty years afterwards, he still recalled it. On summer evenings, when he had the first children of his Turin Oratorio around him, he drew their attention to the days of his early childhood, and more than once recounted the tragic episode: " I was not two years old," he said, " when my father died, and I cannot remember what he was like. I can only remember my mother's words: ' There, you have no father now, Johnny dear.' Everyone left the death-chamber, but I was determined to stay. ' Come, John, come along,' lovingly insisted my mother. ' If father isn't coming, I won't go,' said I. ' Come, now, dear child, your father has gone away.' And with these words the holy woman burst into tears, and drew me away. I wept because she did, for what can a child understand at that age? But these words, ' You have no father, Johnny dear,' have always been fixed in my mind. Since that first sorrow, and until I was five years old, I have no other recollection of my childhood."

One day, praying at his tomb at Valsalice, Cardinal Bégin, Archbishop of Quebec, drew his finger beneath the words, *Orphanorum Pater,* Father of Orphans. How many thousands did he receive in the course of his life! Who can tell whether the stream of charity which staunched their wretchedness did not take its rise from that early grief of the two-year-old child who heard those sad words, " You have no father now, Johnny dear! "

With the head of the family gone, the widow took the reins in hand, and then was seen what a masterly woman was this illiterate peasant, whose faith was more precious than a life's experience. Her toil, her courage, and her confidence in God kept the house going just as when her husband was alive. Her mother-in-law, almost always confined to her bed in her infirmity, received all the care she could expect, and queened it in the humble dwelling like the most revered of grand-

parents. Her sons, her three sons between whom she made no difference though the eldest was another woman's, were brought up with gentleness and firmness in the practice of the Christian virtues by their admirable mother, who, from twenty-nine to forty-five, had not a moment's rest till she had seen each of them set up in his own career.

We should like to dwell at greater length on the fifteen years of education given to her three little children by this most humble of peasant women: we might learn from her what it means to be a mother in the fullest sense of the word. But we must confine ourselves to a short sketch which, we suspect, may seem to some to adapt too much of the ideal to the reality. However, we have only to illustrate each feature of our outline with an example taken from the inner history of the smoky cabin at Becchi.

This poor unlettered Piedmontese woman had a subtle sense of true education. Neither anything nor anyone, neither the priest as a preacher nor as a catechist, nor the teacher in his school, can replace the mother: she alone can fashion the heart. A high and noble duty which Margaret Bosco instinctively understood; and how she devoted herself to doing it!

At the bottom of this education, as at its top, was God. Every morning and every evening, before the crucifix, the three little children in a row, with the two women behind them, knelt down, and from all five hearts went up a prayer for their daily bread, for courage to do their duty, and for the pardon of every fault. Scarcely had reason dawned in their little brains than they were taken to the priest to confess their first sins. On all occasions they were reminded of the great Witness who would also be their Judge. " God sees you," their mother kept telling them. " God sees you children. I may be away: He is always there." And she would seize the least opportunity of impressing this thought of their Creator in its various aspects upon the hearts of her sons. On a starry night she would take them out and say: " All the stars are wonderful; it is God who put them up there. If the sky is so lovely, what must Paradise be like? " Or else, in the presence of one of those magnificent dawns which tinge the snowy girdle of the Alpine horizon with a ruddy glow, " What wonders God has made for us, dear children! " If hail had destroyed the humble family vineyard wholly or in part, " Let us bow our heads," she murmured. " God gave

us these beautiful bunches of grapes, and now He has taken them away. He is the Lord. It is a trial for us, for the wicked a punishment." And on winter evenings, when the family was huddled together round a flaming log and the north wind was whistling or the icy rain was hammering on the roof: " Dear children, how we should love God for providing us with what is needful. He is indeed our Father who is in heaven."

And yet during these dreadful years, the needful for which she was so thankful was sometimes extremely little. In 1815 and 1816 times were very hard owing to the late frosts and an unparalleled drought which devastated the harvests of that district. Two whole days a friend scoured the country and the markets to buy food at any price to fill the five mouths in the little cottage: a mere waste of time; he returned with empty hands. The poor woman knew not what saint to invoke for her three little children and their grandmother famishing with hunger. There were, indeed, in the shed the two good beasts which every family of peasants expects to provide them with part of their daily fare: a cow and her calf; but if one of them were to be sacrified, and if the famine were prolonged, their future would be endangered. Margaret was in perplexity; it was the time to pray. The whole family knelt down together to ask for counsel from on high. This done, as if it had been settled by her prayer, the mother and her neighbour went straight to the stable. In a few minutes the calf was killed, and soon the hunger of the household found relief from the sufferings they had endured.

It was not only for the needs of the body that this watchful mother was so vigilant; more than all she took thought for the training of the soul, and she began by feeding her childrens' minds with the pure teaching of the faith. She could neither read nor write, but she knew all the catechism by heart, and Scripture History and the Life of our Lord as well. From her memory all this living doctrine, patiently doled out, was passed on into the minds of her boys. She might have found some excuse in her daily cares for handing over this work to the zeal of the curé of Castelnuovo; but in Italy, at that time, the catechising of children took place only in Lent, and that meant for these children walking more than six miles a day; she preferred to teach them herself everything she knew, trusting to her work being checked or completed

by the curé of the parish. This early Christian teaching, falling from his mother's lips, explains much in the harassed childhood of little John Bosco.

The three boys were also kept away from dangerous companions. Certainly there were not many of them; but the scabby sheep, which may infect a whole flock, is to be met with everywhere and at all times; and the little Boscos jostled with them without knowing it. But their mother knew it.

"Mother, may we play with so-and-so, who is calling us?"

"Yes, children."

And off the children ran joyfully out-of-doors.

But sometimes their request met with a very decided "No," and then nothing would have made them cross the threshold.

What exemplary behaviour was to be seen in this humble cottage! Above all, Margaret meant her children to be workers; they were never to be idle. When only four years old, John used to tear up hemp stalks; later on, he and his brothers used to help in the house-work: chopping wood, drawing water, picking vegetables, sweeping rooms, taking the beasts out into the fields, cleaning the stable, shaking down the fruit, gathering firewood, hanging up bunches of maize on the balcony to dry, watching the baking of the bread, milking the cows and so forth. They worked hard at Becchi.

And the life they led was intentionally strenuous. This provident mother wanted to prepare her sons for the battle of life by hardening their powers of resistance against all its difficulties. In her humble dwelling everyone rose with the sun, both summer and winter; there was no lying in bed in the morning; they shook themselves and then, up! The morning meal was of the simplest: a slice of dry bread; none of these little legs was too short for long walks, and later on we shall find John going to school four times a day and covering more than twelve miles. In the evening, if a beggar on the road asked for help, or in the night, if a sick neighbour appealed to their charity, the boys were up and ready to afford whatever aid they could; when they returned to bed, it was not to a soft mattress of wool, but to a harder and healthier one of maize-leaves. Their education was a sound one, but rather Spartan, and it turned these three children into stout fellows who never shirked any job that looked rather tough.

Nor did they show any reluctance to obey the least of their mother's orders. Mother Margaret meant to be obeyed, and obeyed she was. Every Thursday she went to Castelnuovo market with her butter and eggs. Before starting, she told each of the boys what he was to do. On getting home in the afternoon, before she took the piece of blessed bread which she always brought back for them out of her basket she made them give an account of what they had done. " Antony, Joseph, John, let us see if my work has been done, and well done." And each had to show that he had thoroughly obeyed his mother. " Well done." Margaret happy and proud, would then say, " well done, here is your piece of blessed bread."

At Becchi they were poor, yes, very poor, but that was just why they always found room for any beggar who knocked at the door. As the home was known to be hospitable, there was no lack of callers. Generally they were either genuine paupers or passing pedlars; sometimes, too, deserters from Napoleon's army hiding in the adjoining woods or real bandits hunted by the police. After nightfall these people would knock at the kindly door, which would always open. To the passing traveller were offered a bowlful of soup and a helping of polenta, and he was shown a place in the straw which was ready for him. Sometimes he could not stay to crawl into it, for at the bottom of the rise the royal carabineers were already in sight: he had to slip off through one door while the latter, coming in through the other, were begged to sit down and have a drop of wine and warm themselves and make themselves at home. Once it happened that the wretches had not time to fly and they had to hide trembling in the stable with a mere partition between them and the police, through which they could follow the alarming remarks of the sergeant telling of the men whom he was tracking down. But under Margaret's roof the right of asylum was never violated; the police knew that her house was open to everyone, to them as well as those they were after, without any discrimination and in all charity, and therefore they held up their investigation on the threshold of the kindly house. And all these good friends, as Margaret called them, when bed-time came, never failed at any rate, in token of gratitude, to kneel down with the family, searching in the back of their memories for some shreds of prayer to take their part in the *Paters* and the *Aves*. Often before leaving her charitable roof, the hawkers

would let their kindly hostess glance through their pack to make sure that they were not going to sell spiritually harmful wares.

Such instances of goodness were slowly fashioning the hearts of her boys, and Margaret taxed her ingenuity to influence her sons in this way more by the gentle firmness of her methods than by a tone of authority imposing compliance. With an exquisite sense of proportion she was able to refrain from the severity that raises its voice, shows itself intractable, and resorts to violence, as well as from the false kindness that tries to reach its ends by cajolery and imploring. She neither used foolish endearments nor wild cries, but calmness, serenity, self-control, true gentleness, powerful and almost always unfailing weapons. She never beat her children, but she never gave way to them; she threatened to be angry, but was ready to yield at the first sign of repentance; she shut her eyes to trifles which are given such importance by some modern parents, but kept a sharp look-out for any harmful tendencies that required immediate correction; she smiled upon her boys' outbursts of noisy merriment, but never allowed any waywardness. More than all, indeed above all, she secured the obedience of her children by inspiring them with a very lively and tender affection towards herself, and with an extreme dread of arousing her displeasure. And this twofold feeling in their little Catholic hearts enabled her to attain her end.

Yet these boys were not easy to manage.

Their half-brother Antony, the eldest, was headstrong, rough, jealous, without the least delicacy of feeling, proud of being the eldest and of his physical strength, rather slow-witted, though able to read and write, but full of disdain for any work that was not physical: yet on the whole, although churlish, capable of good impulses.

Joseph, gentle and quiet, not in the least troublesome, quick-witted and ingenious: he was always able to manage and never at a loss in any case. He would have made a capital trader, had not work on the land kept him tied to the country.

John, on the contrary, was both fervent and strong-willed. He was both intelligent and earnest, speaking little and noticing much. His head was small, firm-set and frizzled, containing a rare energy of will-power and and an unrivalled gift for imitation; and along with this went a warm, a very warm heart, and an innate sense of duty. To all these endowments

add an ever restless imagination, which from childhood to the end of his life kept on constructing, at first new games, then lofty dreams, and last of all immense missionary schemes.

How did the three brothers get on together? Joseph and John, perfectly well; and that as long as they lived; but with Antony it was otherwise. He took undue advantage of his position as eldest son to insist upon having his own way, and of his strength to dominate his brothers. As we shall see, if little John's childhood was a sad one, it was his half-brother who made it so. From nine till fifteen the little fellow had to endure an unheard-of-amount of suffering from his eldest brother, whose envy persisted in wanting to make a peasant of him when God was constantly testifying by the plainest and most plentiful signs that He had chosen him for the service of souls. This evil jealously was sometimes brutally exhibited towards his brothers. How often had mother Margaret to intervene to protect her sons from Antony or to comfort them after a fight in which they had been worsted though united. At such times, overcoming her grief at seeing her own children beaten by one who was not her own, she satisfied herself with shaming the big fellow, who was nine years older than his brothers, for thus taking advantage of his strength. Sometimes Antony took such remarks badly, and used to discharge his surplus of ill-humour upon the patient mother. There were even times when he would go up to her with clenched fists and threaten her with evil words on his lips. " Ah, step-mother," he would growl, " you bad step-mother! Unless I held myself in . . ."

Margaret, with her sinewy arm might have cooled his wrath with a couple of blows, but she stepped back a little and calmly looked him in the face and said to her furious step-son: " You are unfair, Antony, and your anger makes you malicious. If I have always called you my son, it is because I have looked upon you as such, since you are the child of my dear Francis, your father. You know well that if I wished I could give you the punishment you deserve, but I will not. I will never use such ways with my children. You are my son, and I will not beat you. Now, do what you will." And she left him there, staggered and confounded, subdued by her splendid self-control, which in time transformed his violent nature into that of a thoroughly good fellow, highly esteemed and sought after by all his neighbours.

Later on, when John was a priest with a host of little ones around him, he used to revive all these scenes of his childhood; he used to think of his mother when she was at grips with the wills of her three boys, who were not always docile or easily swayed, and he recollected all the methods of patience and gentle firmness and smiling authority which she made use of to manage them; and he tried to copy her. A separate chapter will be devoted to his wonderful education genius; but if, owing to his works, his teachings and his writings, John Bosco may be ranked among the great names of modern educationalists, he owes it primarily to the examples set before him in his childhood and youth under that humble family roof at Becchi.

And now we come to the first mysterious page of his childhood which was to set the course of John's life for ever towards the priesthood. The supernatural which, according to the first defender of the Cause of John Bosco, Cardinal Vives y Tuto, invaded his life more than any other man's, is about to show itself for the first time. A dream, a simple dream, yet one which will recur, like a phrase in music, at all the turning-points in his life, disturbed his little soul at the age of nine. He thought, as he said on awaking, that he was in a field amidst a host of children, yelling, shouting, cursing and making mischief. First he tried to quiet them with persuasion, and then with blows. But a mysterious person came up and said to him: " No. Don't use violence. Be gentle. Be gentle, if you want to win their friendship." Then the rascals, who for a moment had turned into all sorts of wild beasts, changed into timid submissive lambs, while a woman's kindly voice rose sweetly above the scene and said to him: " Take your crook and lead them out to pasture. Later on, you will understand the meaning of this vision.

Next morning John was most eager to relate his strange dream, and everyone wanted to explain it in his own way. " Perhaps you will be a tender of sheep or goats or of other animals," placidly remarked Joseph. " Unless you are to be the leader of a robber band," was Antony's bitter suggestion. " Give no importance to a dream," murmured the wise old grandmother. But Margaret fastening a long and loving look upon her son, thought: " Who knows if some day he may not be a priest? "

She it was who saw aright. In fact, during the years that followed,

little John several times confessed to his mother his ardent desire of becoming a priest.

" A priest! A priest! " his mother would reply; " that is easy to say. But why would you be a priest? What makes you think of that? "

" Listen, mother," John would say, " if I can get ordained one day, I shall devote my life to children. I will draw them to myself. I will love them and make them love me. I will give them good advice, and spend my whole life for the salvation of their souls."

And he began to put his apostolic scheme into practice round about him at Becchi. During a short stay at the age of nine with one of his aunts, a servant of the curé of Capriglio, he learnt to read fluently, and this modest accomplishment enabled him to enliven the long winter evenings. In the little village farms they vied with one another as to who should have the young reader—such colour and life did he impart to his story. Perched upon a stool or chair to be well above his hearers, he started reading the *Reali di Francia* to one of the most simple, the most diverse and the most attentive of audiences: and for hours and hours the good Piedmontese stayed on, hanging upon the words of little John. Needless to say, the recital began and ended between two solemn signs of the cross and two fervent " Hail Marys."

In summertime it was quite different: the reader turned into a juggler, clown or acrobat. In a corner of the Bosco's field which ran down on the right of the cottage, he stretched a rope between a pear-tree and a cherry-tree, unrolled a carpet on the ground, and on Sunday afternoons, in the presence of a large attendance of spectators of all ages, went through a juggler's full performance. As a tumbler he constantly made various and dangerous leaps, turned cart-wheels, walked with his feet in the air and made marvellous recoveries; as a conjurer, he would transform one dozen eggs into ten dozen, turn water into wine, strangle a fowl and bring it to life again, and extract large silver coins from the spectators' noses; as an acrobat, he would leap and run and dance on the tightrope, hang on to it with one foot, then with two, and finish up with dozens of daring tumbling tricks. In his mind the whole of the programme was only a means, the best he could devise, to get the villagers to come to him and pay their dues by devoutly reciting the rosary first and by listening to a somewhat shortened, but yet fairly faithful, reproduction of the sermon of the curé of Murialdo.

Sometimes there was an attempt at resistance on the part of the audience, a few dull murmurs, efforts to slip away for a while; but then John would put his bargain point-blank before them. " You must take it or leave it," he would say with firmness; " my tricks are for those who say the rosary. If you give us the slip, then don't return for the entertainment." And everyone stayed on. Strange little fellow whose authority at ten years of age could sway these children and youths and adults, whose minds his apostolic heart already sought to quicken with thought of heaven!

What was the cause of this early success of a little peasant boy who was almost uneducated? There were two reasons, and we shall see them displayed throughout his life: God had endowed him with an indisputable attraction for the young, and he endeavoured himself incessantly to surround all his activities with a prestige which made then acceptable to everyone.

At Becchi he owed such prestige to his skill as an acrobat. He did not find the talent in his cradle. To bring his body to such a point of marvellous agility, the play of his fingers and of his limbs and of his whole person to such a degree of flexibility, he had to follow the mountebanks at the fairs very attentively. He had constantly to practice alone in his corner of the field, apart from any witnesses. When he went with his mother to the market, if an acrobat was drawing a crowd of loafers round his platform, you would be sure to find little John in the front row, all eyes and ears, closely watching the least gesture of the performer to discover its secret. He returned home with his stock of observations and, as soon as he was free and had his mother's permission, he set about reproducing the mountebank's programme. Eight or ten times he would smash his nose or miss some sleight-of-hand trick, but he persisted unremittingly at his job till he had triumphed over the difficulty. With an observant mind, a body easily under control and pliant in every part, a rare gift of imitation, and astonishing audacity, he had all that was wanted for success. This boldness, as we shall see, he carried with him throughout his career; it was this which launched him into enterprises that most men thought mad. Afterwards, as in the days of his boyhood, he will still be the little tightrope dancer who, though his heart may tremble while he goes forward into danger, still gets through it with a sure foot and victoriously attains his end.

Such precociousness of mind, such a love of goodness, such a grasp of Christian teaching, proved that their possessor had all that was required for going to the sacrament of the Eucharist. But unfortunately, Jansenism had filtered through insensibly and secretly from Savoy into Piedmont, and in the diocese of Turin no one was allowed to go to Holy Communion until twelve or thirteen years of age. John, however, was made an exception; at ten and a half years old he was permitted to make his first Communion. It was at Easter at the end of March 1826, that he was given the divine Host for the first time in the parish church of Castelnuovo. The only definite record of this great event is contained in the counsels given by Margaret Bosco to her youngest son in the evening of that day: " My son," she said, " I fondly trust that God has really taken possession of your heart this morning. Promise Him to keep good and pure as long as you live. Go to Holy Communion often; but beware of sacrilege; and therefore be frank in your confessions. Be obedient: go readily to catechism and to sermons. Flee bad companions like the plague." Among the notes in which John later on wrote down these wise words, we find the following: " I tried to carry out these recommendations, and from that day onwards my life seemed to be improving. Above all I learnt to obey and to submit, though before then I often used to set my own fancy against any orders by those who were over me."

A few weeks afterwards, at the beginning of spring of the same year, 1826, Providence seemed to wish to direct the boy towards the end he longed for. An accident, a very small one, a mere talk by the roadside, appeared likely to open up a chance of learning for him. Hitherto it had been impossible to think of it; the Boscos were too poor to pay for schooling. Despite his vivacity of mind and his violent desire to learn, John went on with his digging. He could read: that was something, yet it was little, for he would soon be eleven. How backward he would be compared with other schoolboys of his age! But neither he nor his mother ceased to hope for better days — they waited for God's hour.

It struck one April evening. In that year the Jubilee which had brought about four hundred thousand pilgrims to Rome a few months before had been extended to the whole Church, and in the diocese of Turin it was to be gained from March to September. The Boscos

were nearer Buttigliera than Castelnuovo and resolved to follow the exercises of the former parish, which summoned the faithful for one week's course. Buttigliera is about two and a half miles from Becchi. Hence there was nothing very alarming in doing ten miles a day to hear two sermons very early in the morning and two instructions in the evening. The Jubilee graces were well worth that amount of trouble.

After the last address, they returned in groups at nightfall, and where the roads started some turned their steps towards Becchi, some towards Capriglio, and some towards Murialdo. An old priest, a septuagenarian, thus returned every evening in the company of these good Catholics: he was Don Calosso, the incumbent of Murialdo. Despite his advanced age, he too did his ten miles a day to gain the graces of the Jubilee indulgence at the close of his life. On the road, from the beginning of the week he had been watching the little boy, with frizzled hair and lively step, rather apart from everyone else, who appeared to linger in meditation upon the words of the missioners.

" Hullo, my little man," said he one evening; " where do you come from? "

" From Becchi."

" Well, did you understand any of the sermon this evening? "

" Yes, all of it, Father."

" All of it! That's quite a lot. Come now, let us see. Repeat four sentences from the address, and you shall have twopence."

" Four from the first point, or from the second? "

" From whichever you like. Do you remember the subject dealt with? "

" Why, yes. The preacher spoke of the necessity of not putting off one's conversion."

" And what did he say about it? "

" There were three parts in his address; which would you have me repeat? "

" Choose yourself."

" Well, I will go through all three of them."

And without faltering the little fellow reeled off the three parts of the evening instruction without a mistake. *The sinner who persists in his sin will certainly some day lack the time, the grace, and will for his conversion.*

The good people of the village had gathered round the little fellow, and the miles went by one after another unnoticed, such was the charm of the boy's words and the astonishment aroused by his marvellous memory, which held everyone's attention.

" Bravo! " said Don Calosso, as the child finished. " Bravo! I see you have well remembered the first instruction; but what of the second one? "

" The second? Do you want the whole of it too? "

" No, only a few words."

" Very well, here it is. What struck me most in the second sermon was the description of the meeting between the soul of the damned person with his body, at the sound of the holy trumpets awakening all men for the last judgement."

And thereupon little John began to repeat the dialogue with which the preacher had given a dramatic turn to the scene.

The good old priest could not control his feelings on encountering such memory. What a wonderful child was this! What precocity he showed! And at once he asked himself: to whom can these gifts be of service, and for what can they be used? What will this talented child make of his life? Will it be a power for good or evil, or merely wasted? Who can tell?

And the talk between the priest and the boy was resumed eargerly, inquiringly and tersely.

" What is your name, my son? Who are your father and mother? Where do you go to school? "

" My name is John Bosco. I lost my father when I was two. My mother has five to feed. I can read and I can write a little."

" You haven't yet begun your grammar? "

" What is that? "

" Would you like to learn? "

" Oh, yes."

" Why don't you, then? "

" My brother Antony is against it."

" Why? "

" He says we always know enough to till the fields."

" Why do you want to learn? "

" To become a priest."

" And why do you want to be a priest? "

" To get children to come to me to teach them religion and to keep them from being bad. I can see plainly that if they turn out badly it is because no one cares for them . . . But excuse me, Father. This is my home. I turn off here to go up to Becchi."

Indeed, the child and his company had come to the foot of the rise crowned by the village. No one had found the road a long one.

" Can you serve Mass, little John? " asked the old priest by way of saying good-bye.

" I know a little about it."

" Then come and serve mine to-morrow. I have something to say to you."

The boy went, and after Mass the old priest tried to sound the young peasant's soul a little further. He inferred that he was called to higher work than that on the land. He had, indeed, to till, to sow, to reap and store, but in the field of souls.

" Tell your dear mother to come and see me on Sunday, and we will make all our plans with an eye to your future."

Next Sunday Margaret Bosco went to see Don Calosso, and it was settled that John should go to Murialdo every morning to take lessons in Latin. The rest of the day he would go in working in the fields, for Antony was always there on the watch, jealous, stupid and tyrannical. He turned almost red with anger when he heard of the decision that had been taken. He was quieted by the thought that the precious lessons were to start in six months' time, in the autumn, when all the heavy work on the land begins to stop.

It was indeed a delightful year that the boy spent at the good rector's at Murialdo. He always thought of it with a thrill. At last he had found the priest of his dreams, good, simple and fatherly, and also very pious, most wise in his counsels and staid and dignified in his behaviour. Already, though so young, he had suffered — it is he who tells us so — from the distant attitude of the ministers of religion. He bowed to them on the road, but they only replied to his bows with a touch of the hat. Never a word or a gesture that drew their soul and his together. It was not thus that his little catholic mind thought of the priesthood: he conceived it rather as an immense loving-kindness embracing all men and things in the smile of religion. But that was

during the prevalance of Jansenism, when a contrary attitude was rigorously demanded to fill the faithful with respect for the things mysterious and divine represented by the priest.

After three months of Italian grammar, little John started learning Latin at Christmas. At first, the declensions were tough work, he confesses. But he set himself to work so furiously and tenaciously against all difficulties that at Easter he had already gone through the whole of the Latin grammar. " Your son's memory is a wonder," said Don Calosso to Margaret whenever he met her. " You must go on sending him to me." The good woman would have liked to do so, but unluckily the few hours filched from farmwork for lessons had the knack of exasperating Antony afresh as soon as spring appeared. In vain did little John put in double the amount of work, do his lessons in secret when going out or coming home or in the evening after work was over, it was all no good: the very sight of a book maddened the big fellow of twenty-four; he was not only mad, but spiteful. At last he could bear it no longer.

" There, that is enough," said he. " I won't have any more of these grammars in the house. They are no good for making a living. I have grown up big and strong and have never put my nose into any such books."

" Your argument is all wrong," replied John.

" Prove it."

" Well, our donkey is stronger than you, yet he has never been to school. Do you want to be like him? "

Antony made just one bound towards his brother; but the little fellow, as soon as he had shot his bolt, had fled.

At other times the stupid boor would deluge the boy with sarcasm to destroy his taste for learning.

" Look at the little gentleman," he would say. " He is no bigger than that, and he wants to be a scholar. And why? Just because he's lazy. He wants to live in idleness while we are to go on eating our porridge. Do you think we are all going to sweat and toil to pay for your schooling? Come, look alive, and get your spade. We don't want any scholars here."

If he happened to find his young brother with a book in his hands when there was nothing else to do — on a rainy day or a holiday — he

would tear it from him and fling it at the wall, saying: " I've told you hundreds of times not to put your nose in it. You were born to be a countryman like me: just get that well into your head.

The situation became too strained to last. Mother Margaret saw that. Next autumn, for the sake of peace she put a stop to the boy's lessons; and as this action, which was so painful to two hearts, did not succeed in pacifying the elder brother's animosity, one February evening she made up her mind to the inevitable sacrifice.

" It will be better for you to go away, John," she said between her sobs. " You see, Antony gets no calmer. Go wherever God's grace may guide you; try to find work on adjoining farms. If you can't find any, go on to Moncucco and ask for the Moglias; they are rich and kind, and they will welcome you. That's settled for to-morrow."

And next day, on a cold February morning in 1828, with his poor little package of shirts and handkerchiefs wrapped around his beloved books under his arm, the brave little fellow started off at random, as grace might guide.

And guided he was, for his steps were led, as his mother had foreseen, to Moncucco. At the Moglias, as at all the farms which he had visited, they would not engage him: at that season work was short, and farm-labourers were only hired at the end of March; but he begged the head of the family so earnestly that they ended by taking him. He was to stay for nearly two years under this hospitable roof, a model farmer-boy, beginning as a free boarder with no salary, and rising gradually to 15, 30 and 50 liras a year, so fair and honest were his services. From thirteen to fifteen he lived the life of Becchi at Moncucco. On week-days he looked after the stables, on Sunday he gathered a few children in the hayloft to teach them catechism, to repeat scraps of sermons for them or to tell them nice stories. In summertime the shade of a mulberry-tree held together the first beginnings of a rustic club less well attended but not less attentive than that of his mother's hamlet. More eager than ever to become a priest, he confessed his desire even to his employers.

" But how will you manage to study for it? " they asked him. " It costs nearly a hundred and forty pounds to make anyone a priest to-day: how are you going to find all that? "

" I don't know, but I shall succeed."

And not to let Don Calosso's teaching get rusty, out in the fields while tending the cattle, or in the farm when his evenings were free, he went on with the Latin grammar which he had learnt with the good priest.

In December, 1829, his heavy trial seems to be coming to an end. One morning on his way to the meadow, he meets with his uncle Michael Occhiena, a prosperous stock-breeder, who had always shown him sympathy.

" Well, John, do you like being with the Moglias? "

" How can you think that I like being with them? Certainly they are all good to me here, but how can I help it? I can't stifle my heart's desire to learn, and I see that time keeps on slipping away. Soon I shall be fifteen."

" Poor little Johnny! " said his sympathetic uncle. " Come, leave the matter to me. Take the flock home to your masters; pick up your pack and go back to Becchi. I am returning to Chieri to-night; and on the way I will talk to your mother, and you will see; all will come right."

Fancy how happy John was to take leave of his masters! They were so attached to him that they were grieved to death at losing the pious, amenable and hardworking little cowboy who had been dwelling under their roof for twenty-two months like a smile from heaven.

On the evening of that day, his mother would not take him in at Becchi, lest Antony should think that his return home had been concerted by her and her brother Michael. The poor little lad had therefore to wait and shiver in a ditch near by till his uncle's return from the market. When the latter passed by at nightfall he found his poor nephew chilled through and through, and climbed with him up to Becchi. There he managed to get the terrible Antony to listen to reason, and John took his place at the family fireside once more.

But he was not at the end of his troubles. On his good uncle's invitation, the curés of Castelnuovo and Buttigliera declined when they asked to go on with the Latin lessons of an already half-prepared pupil. " Too much to do," they both replied. " We can never get through it all. How can we take on this extra responsibility? " Application was then made to Don Calosso, who should have been thought of first. His age and infirmities had led him to resign, and he lived in retirement

at Murialdo. He consented enthusiastically to take his dear pupil back. His kindness even went further. " Don't be alarmed about your future, Johnny dear," said the good old man. " I will see to it. While I am alive, I will help you, and if God calls me to Himself, I will arrange for you to complete your education." Thus every obstacle appeared to be surmounted, and the boy's excited imagination saw the road open up before him straight and clear and easy to travel. How quickly would he run along it!

Alas! For the last time he saw between the one desire of his life and its assured realisation the determined will of his eldest brother. But then his mother intervened. She had waited patiently thus far in the hope that her gentleness would end in breaking down Antony's opposition. Seeing that all her endeavours were useless, she took a step that was to ensure at once the vocation of her youngest son, the peace of her household and the future of her three children: she claimed from the court the division of their patrimony. Antony tried to oppose this, but in vain. She held fast, tired of all the struggles which might wreck a life's happiness both human and divine. A few months later the division was decreed, and without leaving the village Antony departed from the family home. At last, they could begin to breathe freely.

A few days later John went to stay with Don Calosso. His happiness was now full. " No one," he afterwards wrote, " could have any idea of it. Don Calosso was an angel of God to me. I loved him more than a father. I constantly prayed for him, it was my joy to serve him in everything. My delight was to tire myself out in his service to prove how grateful I was to him. In one day in his humble house I made as much progress as in a week at Becchi." It seemed, then as if he was going to make up for lost time, to swallow two mouthfuls at one bite. Who could now thwart his studies? Who? Death. It came, cruelly and unexpectedly, to cut down John's youthful dream at one sweep. One November evening, when John had gone to fetch some clean linen, the people of Murialdo ran to tell him that Don Calosso had had an apoplectic stroke. The boy ran as fast as he could to his benefactor's bedside. Unfortunately paralysis of the brain had done its work, and the holy old man could not speak. But he was able to show by signs that there was a key under his pillow, and that the key would open his desk, and that everything in it belonged to John. The good

priest's mind remained clear, and his intentions were plain: after death he meant to protect his pupil's vocation and to ensure its success, as he had promised. All this took place on November 19; on the evening of the 21st he died, aged seventy-five.

Think of the perplexity of this boy of fifteen! The unforeseen death was going to fling him back into the unknown, and who could tell when and how his education was to be resumed? The old man's savings — about two hundred and fifty pounds — settled the problem immediately, and he could take possession of them with a clear conscience. But in doing so, would he not do an injury to the rights of the heirs? A bitter anxiety! His trust in God triumphed over the temptation. " When Don Calosso's heirs came," he calmly records in his memorial, " I gave them the key of his desk and all that belonged to him."

Only with this act of abandonment to Providence he was all at sea once more, and he was already over fifteen. What was he to do? Although the school term was far gone, his mother decided that he should attend the little Latin classes given by a local priest who also had an elementary school at Castelnuovo. How gladly did young John welcome the proposal. During the first few weeks his great eagerness made him face unflinchingly the twelve miles he had to traverse daily in making two attendances at the school. To save expense he used to walk all these miles barefoot, with his shoes slung across his shoulders. He only put them on at the entrance of wayside villages. But this strain would have worn him out in the end; so he began by not returning for lunch, taking his scanty meal with him in a small canvas bag. On some of the winter evenings, when a storm was howling or the roads were, covered with snow, he did not return, but slept in a cupboard under the stairs lent him by a friendly family. Finally, mother Margaret perceived that it would be to her son's advantage that he should settle down at Castelnuovo. So she made an agreement with a worthy local tailor named Roberto, who in consideration of a small payment in kind — corn, wine and eggs — agreed to receive John into his home. This was the second separation between mother and son. On letting him go she gave him only one counsel, but a very simple salutary one: " Above all, dear John, love the Blessed Virgin well." Had he any need of such advice?

The first few weeks at Castelnuovo were rather hard. The little

schoolboys of the place were never tired of making fun of the big fellow of fifteen coming from that wretched hole, Becchi, with his lanky frock coat, unhooked from nobody knows where, giving him an ill-dressed and ragged appearance which was bound to provoke buffoonery.

To this trial, which he let go by with a smile, was added another much harder, which had formerly wrung his heart: there was no way of getting into touch with the priests. They deliberately kept at a distance, giving room to the faithful. Very cold and reserved and rather solemn, they walked along the roads, answering any greetings with a bow, and no more. How John's young heart yearned for expansion and for a confidant, and how it suffered from such icy gravity! Some evenings he used to lament his inability to tell out his soul to the only being who could understand and help it. " If I were a priest," he murmured, " I would not act thus. I would draw close to the children and gather them together; I would make them love me and love them too, and with my words and counsels I would work for the salvation of their souls. That is what Don Calosso used to do."

" What can we do about it, my boy? " said his mother whenever he returned to the subject. " It is best to be resigned."

" But what would a good word cost them, just one minute given by the way to a little boy? "

" What do you want them to tell you? "

" Something to do my heart good."

" But they have so much work in the confessional, in the pulpit, in sick visiting! "

" That is true; but do we not belong to their flock, and are we not their little lambs? "

" Well, you want them to waste their time on you."

" Did Jesus waste His on the children whom He used to gather around Him, despite the Apostles? "

" You are not wrong: but, once more, what can be done about it? "

" Well, if ever I am a priest, it will not be so with me. I shall devote all my life to the young. The children will never see me pass them by looking grave and distant. I will always be the first to speak to them."

Again, if these men had only been grave and distant, but unhappily his teacher did not succeed in guiding him. He had got it into his head

that it was impossible for any ecclesiastical vocation to proceed from Becchi, and all the more so if that vocation were a tardy one; nothing could be done with it; he persisted in believing in the boy's mental incapacity. A trifling instance fully proves the strength of this prejudice in the teacher's mind. The Latin class was divided into several sections from the sixth to the second forms. One day of Latin composition young Bosco, who left his wings growing, asked the master to let him do his composition with the fourth form.

"You will see that I can manage it," said he.

"You, a rustic from Becchi, do you really think that? Picking mushrooms and bird's-nesting, that is what you are fit for; but for decent fourth form Latin composition, not a bit of it."

"Let me try all the same," urged the pupil in a low and gentle voice, "and you will see."

"I shall see nothing, for I shall not correct your work. I have no time to waste on your stupidities. Now, do what you will."

So Bosco did his fourth form work, and three hours afterwards brought it to the master, who threw it aside contemptuously.

"Please be so good as to read it," begged the boy; "I shall be glad to know your opinion."

"Have I not just told you that you could not do it?"

"But anyhow, read it," cried some of Bosco's companions, being interested in the episode.

The master had the unfortunate habit of yielding to the whims of his noisy pupils, and therefore took the Latin exercise and read it. The translation was almost faultless.

"What did I tell you?" cried the master as he put the exercise down. "Incompetent as you are, you have cribbed it from your neighbour. This is not your own work."

"He has not cribbed it from anybody," said the pupils on either side of him. "Besides, look at our exercises. If he has been cribbing, they must be like his."

Their remark was right. But it was no good, for the teacher's prejudice was too strong, and it ended with an outburst of anger.

"Now then! all the rest of you, perhaps you are going to teach me my own business. If I say Bosco has cribbed, then he has cribbed."

What was there to set against that? Patience and resignation. That

is what the poor boy did, and he soon perceived that that year's work would be almost wasted for him. The tailor Roberto's boarder tried to make the most of the situation by learning his landlord's business. When his time was free he began to sew on buttons, to do hemming and plain needlework; then he tried cutting out trousers and knickerbockers and even waistcoats. He would have been very surprised had he been told that this humble accomplishment would in future be as useful to him as his Latin. By secret and even mysterious ways Providence was leading him to its own ends; and soon he came to understand this, and thanked God for having fashioned him so stoutly in the school of adversity.

During the holidays of 1831 John went back to his mother, who was no longer at Becchi. With his brother Joseph and her neighbour friend, Febbraro, she had rented a neighbouring farm called Sussambrino, and was cultivating it courageously. During his three month's vacation, John resumed his original business: every day he drove the cattle into the fields and tried not to lose any of the notions of Latin he had so hardly picked up during the last disastrous year. What was the coming one to be like? He was asking himself this anxiously, when a twofold answer was vouchsafed to him, one from heaven, the other from this world.

One August morning farmer Turco, a neighbour of the two partners, met him looking very joyful and asked him:

" Why are you so sprightly this morning, Johnny? For some time you have looked rather anxious, but this morning . . ."

" Oh! It is because I am now certain to become a priest."

" Pooh! How's that? "

" Last night I had a dream that assured me of it. I saw a great lady coming towards me leading a large flock to pasture. She came towards me, called me by my name, and said:

" ' Come, little John, you see this flock. Well, I am putting you in charge of it.'

" ' But what am I to do, my Lady, to watch over it and to take care of so many sheep and lambs? I have no pastures to lead them to.'

" ' Don't be afraid,' said she; ' I will look after you and help you.' Then she disappeared.

" You see," said John, " that I can now be easy in my mind."

The Becchi. House where St. John Bosco was born.

Don Bosco's Mother

And, indeed, he was; all the more so, because after the heavenly reply came an earthly one, which was also full of hope. His mother was sending him to Chieri, the little town twelve miles away, to go on with his lessons regularly at the State schools in that place. She had arranged with Madame Matta, a good lady living in Chieri, to look after her son, a day-pupil at the school, and to take him in as a boarder at less than a pound a month, if he were willing to act as a servant in the house. He did not wait to be pressed, and the contract was settled.

But he had to be dressed as a big boy and provided with a modest outfit: where was the money to come from for all this, as well as for quarter's board in advance? Young Bosco took his courage in both hands, and went from door to door in Murialdo, begging the good country-folk to help him, at any rate in kind, in his pious plan. No one refused this charity, and his bag was filled with corn, cheese and eggs, the sale of which, added to a gift from the curé of Castelnuovo, enabled John, at the beginning of November, to start for Chieri, the town of his dreams, the town of students, which formerly, in the sixteenth century, had given shelter to St. Aloysius Gonzaga for several months. The end of the great trial seemed quite close; seven years' tribulations were finishing in a wider hope. Despite the winter season, there was sunshine in the heart of the youth of sixteen who had started on November 4, 1831, on the road to Chieri. His stout shoulders were loaded with a sack of maize, which he would sell on his way through Castelnuovo to buy books, exercise-books and pens; but his heart expanded at the thought that his path was now clear.

And this time he was not mistaken.

Chieri where young Bosco was to spend three years of his life, is a gem among the small Italian towns. So ancient is it as to lose its origin in the darkness of the ages, and it still keeps many traces of its thirteenth-century aspect. Formerly, in the days of the Italian municipalities, in the eleventh century, it was powerful and formidable, a little republic with a right to its own mint, and it held under its sway thirty estates or manors in the plain. Later on, being coveted and persecuted by its neighbour on the left, the Marquis of Monferrato, it threw itself into the protecting arms of its neighbour on the right, the Duke of Savoy. Its position is an enviable one. Lying at the foot of the lowest buttresses of the lesser Alps, protected on three sides by a rampart of hills, it looks down smilingly upon the plain which spreads out its corn-fields and pasture-lands and vineyards between Turin and Asti. Centuries ago it was called " Chieri of the Hundred Towers," for all the noble families of the district — the Balbos, the Broglias, the Bensos, the Tanas — had erected signs of their power in it. In the days of Don Bosco, as in our own, it was only a town of convents and students and weavers, a shred of the capital close by. What religious Order was without a chapel and a monastery in it? Dominicans, Oratorians, Jesuits, Franciscans, Poor Clares, not to mention the rest. Its Gothic cathedral, built at the beginning of the fifteenth century, with its five aisles and twenty-two altars, was without a rival in its breadth and majesty. A town of memories and piety and study, it was for the countryman and the villager who frequented it the awakener and stimulus of his malleable and fervent mind.

Hard indeed was the life of the students of those days. To-day, anyone with a clear vocation may persist till he succeeds in discovering a benefactor or institution to provide him with a scholarship or an exhibition enabling him to complete his course with some frugality; then, it was unusual, indeed very unusual. How could it be managed? They had to be stoics, and often heroes. The lectures were surely free, no doubt; but then there was everything else, and that meant a lot.

Usually the poor student boarded with some acquaintance who furnished a roof, a bed and his soup; and the host was paid in cash or in kind, with sacks of corn, potatoes, chestnuts or measures of wine. Sometimes, too, payment was made in services by helping the house-owner with all kinds of work on returning from the lectures. A youth's parents found his food. Every Saturday, for instance, mother Margaret went to Chieri with a great loaf of brown bread for the week, and with a supply of maize, flour and chestnuts. Needless to say, in the worst winter evenings — and at the foot of these mountains they are sometimes very hard indeed — the pleasant warmth of a fire was unknown. You had to blow your fingers, stamp your feet and then turn to your books again. And as for the books and paper and inkstand and pens and everything else, they had to be bought by the sweat off your brow, by your own hard work, by hiring yourself out to right and to left, here as a scribe, there as a teacher, elsewhere for humbling menial work. From a distance, enveloped as we are in the wadded comfort of our excellent colleges, that kind of life seems to us very rigorous and very hard. Let us not, however, bestow too much of our pity upon these students; for, in the school of adversity, they became men and, later on, they could face life. Suffering could not subjugate them, for they had partaken of it early in life.

The share of tribulation that fell to John Bosco was far from small. To pay for his board and lodging, he gladly not only consented to act as a servant in his mistress's house, but as her son's teacher. He spent two years in this way, after which his pupil's lessons came to an end, and John had to find another roof under the same conditions. His next lodging was at a pastry-cooks who kept an inn. His shop adjoined the great square at Chieri. The last two years of his curriculum expired in this café, which he cleaned up in the morning before going to the lecture, while in the evening he kept the scores of the billiard-players. With his readiness

he soon mastered the turning-out of the specialities of his patron's business, and did it so well that the confectioner undertook more than once to help him to make his fortune in trade. The proposal made him smile, and he went on steadily working at Latin in his leisure time. To-day they still show you the dark cupboard under the stairs where he slept and, after he closed the shutters of the café, by the wavering light of a tallow dip finished the course of studies which became the foundation of all his work as a writer, a preacher and an educator.

But his courage never failed him, and yet sometimes God knows how he needed it, especially under the pressure of poverty and — we may add — of hunger. He was eighteen, and he used to work from dawn till far into the night; neither his muscles nor his mind ever slackened for a minute. What an expenditure of energy! To sustain such exertions he ought to have had plenty to eat. Unhappily, in addition to the traditional portion of soup furnished by his landlord, he had nothing to beguile his appetite with beyond the meagre weekly ration of maize, potatoes and chestnuts brought him by his mother. More than once the big lad's stomach sank into his heels, and his companions noticed it. One of them, named Blanchard, often felt pity for him, and his own dessert would frequently be transferred from his pocket to his friend's. This providential charity was never forgotten by the recipient; more than fifty years later, when he had become famous, the Founder of congregations and surrounded with veneration and honours, he would invite to his table and present to his guests his first benefactor, Blanchard, now an old man, who formerly, in the hard days of his youth, had shared with him his father's apples.

Despite these difficulties, and perhaps even because of them, our young student succeeded marvellously in his curriculum. His mind seemed to have gained from lying fallow for eight years; it attacked Latin and Greek with an energy as fresh as it was compressed, and with a furious desire for knowledge. Hence, no wonder that he made such rapid progress during his first two years; he finished his final course in July 1833, having advanced at the rate of two classes a year. It was almost a record. It was to be explained by his wonderful mental gifts, especially by his marvellous memory, which is shown by the following instance among hosts of others.

He was in the fifth form, and the Life of Agesilaus was being ex-

plained in Cornelius Nepos. That morning he had inadvertently left the Latin book in his lodging. What was to be done? His fertile brain soon devised an expedient; he took out his Latin grammar and pretended to read the translation from it. But his neighbours had noticed the dodge and nudged one another, pointing to their fellow-student who was bending over his book, apparently taking a huge interest in the Life of Agesilaus. This diversion attracted the teacher's attention, who, seeing his pupils' eyes fastened upon John, challenged him suddenly:

" Bosco, construe that again, and go through the explanations given five minutes ago."

Bosco stood up, holding his Latin grammar, and steadily read through the text of Cornelius Nepos word for word, repeating the sentence to parse it, and repeated one after another the historical, geographical and grammatical comments given by the professor. Such was the astonishment of the class at this intellectual feat that Bosco's friends could not contain themselves, but broke out in applause. The master was furious, for he had never seen his class make such a disturbance before.

" What does this mean? " he asked angrily. " Why are you mumbling and clapping your hands? "

" Master," then said one of the boldest, " just look at Bosco's book, from which he has read and reconstrued and commented on this passage of Cornelius Nepos. It is his Latin grammar."

" Go on, Bosco," said the professor in a tone that cut the little demonstration very short, " go on." And while John, looking at his Latin grammar, went on with his translation and explanation of Cornelius Nepos, the teacher left his desk and drew close to his pupil. It was true. John Bosco was working on his memory. Then the lecturer's wrath yielded to admiration:

" Yours is a fortunate memory, my lad," said he. " For its sake I forgive you for leaving your book behind and upsetting the class. Try, all your life through, to make good use of your equipment."

We shall see that this advice was fully carried out.

A mind of the first rank, the heart of an apostle — this young man combined both. At Chieri, as at Castelnuovo and at Moncucco and Becchi, the young were his obsession, the children who ran about the streets, those whom nobody cares for, those who scrape through all

sorts of dangers and sometimes succumb to them. Really bad companions he avoided like the plague, constantly recalling his mother's advice at the time of his first Communion. Even at Chieri were to be found some of these young rascals, ready to pervert the best of their associates.

" Some I knew," he writes in his diary, " who wanted to take me to the theatre, to get me to gamble for money. More than one tried to make me his partner in a plundering expedition; and one of them once dared to suggest that I should steal my landlady's money to buy myself some sweets with."

With such ragamuffins he knew that nothing could be done; but with the rest, with the majority, with the shy, the weak and ignorant, what a field lay open to the zeal of this young apostle!

He began by gathering them into a band of gay companions, whom he christened *The cheery Company* (*La Società dell'allegria*). The rules of the Society were two only: every member must avoid all words or deeds unworthy of a good Christian; and all must be marked for their attention to their school and religious duties. Next to that, the whole troop was ordered to shun downheartedness and gloom. And they were not found wanting. Sometimes, under John's leadership, they scattered amongst the flower-clad hills which look down upon Turin. According to the weather or the season of the year, they brought back supplies of wild strawberries, bilberries or mushrooms; sometimes they started boldly for the capital: sixteen miles out and home was nothing to the young and lively comrades, and when they returned to their lodgings they could give a description of the bronze horse in Saint Charles's Square or the marble steed on the grand staircase of the Royal Palace; and sometimes, on very hot evenings, they preferred to leave the country behind, and to sit on the little bridge that bestrides the river and enjoy the inexhaustible programme provided for them by the expert juggler from Becchi. As in former days, all this honest and keen merriment ended with prayer; the Society had its private meetings here or there, wherever a welcome could be offered, and they used to talk about all sorts of things, more or less, but especially of religion; and on Sunday afternoons, in the Jesuits' church, following their leader, nothing would make them miss the lesson of Christian doctrine, crammed with stories and examples given by the good Fathers to such eager listeners.

One of these famous Sunday afternoon meetings led to an episode which set the whole town astir. For some days an acrobat had taken up his abode there, and sometimes in one square, and sometimes in another, he was drawing the idlers around him by his performance. In itself this was harmless, but did not the wily dog make a point of giving a special show just when Bosco and his band were about to attend the doctrine instruction? Their leader was deeply vexed about it: what could he do? He thought it over for some time, and then came to an amazing decision: he would issue a public challenge to the mountebank, beat him at his own game, and thus clear the field.

The glove was thrown down, and it was caught up enthusiastically by the acrobat. Feeling sure of his victory, he expected the match to attract a crowd at least thrice as large as usual. Nor was he mistaken: next Thursday, a throng surrounded the two competitors, for they saw that the stake in the game was an important one. More than a sum of money was in question: the power to hold one's ground was in dispute between the juggler and our youthful challenger: certainly the beaten candidate would find that his prestige was gone.

As the first event on the programme, the mountebank proposed a race: twenty francs for the man who won it. Unfortunately, Bosco had not the twenty francs, but his friends at once subscribed the sum between themselves. And the two rivals started off from the Turin Avenue. The question was, who would reach the end of the town first. Just at first the acrobat drew ahead, but John quickly overtook him, spurred on by his eager desire to win. They had gone little beyond three hundred yards before he had passed his rival, who was left far behind at the end of the race.

But the man did not then give in. " You have beaten me in running," he said to John, " but in jumping I am sure to beat you. What shall we bet? Forty francs? "

" Come on, let it be forty francs," said John, whose first win had increased his capital to that amount.

They selected a spot where the river was fairly wide. The jump was all the harder because the bed of the stream was edged along the opposite bank by an awkward little wall. The least miscalculation in one's spring might land one in the water, for there was nothing for the jumper to lay hold of. The mountebank made a faultless leap, alighted ex-

actly on the narrow ledge which supported the wall. The onlookers wondered how his rival could possibly do any better: and there stood the man jeering with his arms folded, expecting a poor reply from the student. But it proved crushing. With an admirably calculated spring John flew across the river and seized the parapet with both hands, making a vault which, with an unexpected and perilous bound, landed him on the far side of the little wall. His triumph was complete.

Despite this second check, the tumbler would not admit defeat.

" I shall end up all right," he said, " and beat you. Choose any feat you like, and I will show you."

" Well, I choose a stick for my feat. Eighty francs that you don't beat me with it," answered John, now passing to the offensive.

" Done! "

John then grasped a stick, put his hat on it, stood it on the palm of his hand, and started it waltzing round. From his palm the stick leapt on to the tip of each of his fingers, then on to his elbow, his shoulder, his chin, lips, nose and head, and finally, submissively, without losing its balance for a moment, retraced its path till it had returned to its starting-point.

" My turn," said the man, seizing the stick; " look."

And indeed the juggler's skill was astounding. Stick and hat sprang magically from one spot of his body to another; they were already on their way back when, on their transit from his nose to his chin, the contraption bumped upon the tip of this feature, which was rather prominent; the balance was upset, and the man had to use his hand to prevent a crash. This was our David's third defeat of his Goliath.

Humbled in his minor attainments, and with a lighter purse, the acrobat could stand it no longer: he wanted to restore the damage done to his prestige and his pocket with a single stroke.

" A hundred francs," he cried, " for the one who gets to the highest point of that elm."

" Done! for a hundred francs," said Bosco, whose wins had put him amazingly into form.

The man tore off both coat and waistcoat, and flung them on the ground. Then, grasping the tree, he caught the main branch in a twinkling; afterwards climbing on rapidly, breathlessly and boldly. The fellow's litheness was something prodigious: in a few minutes he was

at the top of the tree, which trembled beneath his weight. No one could climb higher without danger: the flexible stem to which his muscular body clung swayed tragically from side to side and threatened to break asunder. Then the acrobat made his descent amidst a loud burst of applause.

" This time, John," whispered one of his companions, " you are done for."

" Well, we shall see," he replied, going towards the tree.

The gallant youth had a plan of his own. And with a few twists of leg and loin it was crowned with success. With no less swiftness and boldness Bosco in his turn reached the top of the elm, the highest point beyond which it would have been madness to go on. Then to everyone's amazement, the youth's supple body was seen to rise up perpendicularly head downwards, supported by the hands resting on a branch: and now Bosco's feet were higher than the top of the tree! Down below the crowd was staggered for a moment by the daring of the deed, and then they cheered it uproariously, and the young victor met with a delirious reception on setting foot to earth once more.

Happily John and his friends were good fellows; they had no desire to take advantage of their success. The mountebank's defeat was liquidated at the Mule Inn, where at eighteen pence a head the whole troop enjoyed an abundant spread, which cost the loser less than half his losses, leaving his pocket more than fifty francs better off than it otherwise might have been. Nor need it be added that during the service hours on Sundays nothing more was heard of the juggler's trumpet summoning an audience to his platform.

And John was left in peace in the pursuit of his zealous enterprises.

In order to help him in them, God caused a lovely flower of Christian friendship to blossom by the way when he was beginning his rhetoric. This young Comollo, of whom we are about to speak, was the first and sole human affection of his life; and after Comollo's death we shall see our youth of eighteen heroically renounce for ever the ineffable joys of purely human friendship; but he began by inhaling its charming fragrance for the space of four years. How did such tender affection come into being? In the simplest way in the world. One day, in a student's boarding-house at Chieri, they happened to be talking of the high characters of some of their number. " At Chieri," the landlord,

whose name was Marchisio, was just saying, " there is a young man who is regarded as a saint: he is the nephew of the curé of Cinzano." At such a bold assertion John began smiling. Saints, well, they don't run about the streets, and a saint as precocious as all that; well, indeed . . . it was very strange.

" And yet it really is so," said the landlord. " Besides, the lad has something to back him up: his uncle, the rector, is said to be venerated for forty miles round."

John's curiosity was aroused, and he was burning to know such a paragon, when an almost dramatic occurence brought them face to face with one another. Everyone knows that at the beginning of a lecture, if the professor is rather late, his pupils are apt to take liberties. In this matter, Chieri was like other places; the few minutes without any superintendent were noisy as possible; they were chattering and laughing and ragging and jumping over the tables and playing all sorts of tricks, until the unexpected arrival of the lecturer put a sudden stop to everything. One morning the class was particularly stormy, and one of the most rackety of them discovered a fellow-student quietly preparing his lessons in a corner, and wanted to involve him in the general hurly-burly.

" Come along, let your books alone and join us."

" Thank you, but that is not in my line," replied the student; " besides, I am no good at it, and you won't find me a success."

" Come along, all the same," said the first, " otherwise I shall have to make you, with a few kicks and cuffs."

" Do what you will, but I cannot and will not join in with you."

No sooner had he finished the sentence than two rough blows fell sharply upon his cheeks. The victim turned pale at the insult, and then grew red; but, mastering his indignation, he murmured gently amidst the tense silence of the classroom: " Well, and now are you satisfied? Then let me alone. I forgive you." On witnessing this heroic act of patience, John Bosco was deeply impressed.

" Who is this new student? " he asked. " I don't know him."

" He is the nephew of the curé of Cinzano, Louis Comollo."

" Very good," he exclaimed. And he was glad to have found, without looking for him, Marchisio's much vaunted pattern.

From that day a close friendship bound the two together, the

humanist and the rhetorician. They became inseparable. Everything strengthened the ties that united them — their piety, their zest for learning, their love of the Blessed Virgin, their zeal for the good of their comrades, their spirit of self-sacrifice, and even their contrasting characters. For Comollo and Bosco scarcely resembled one another. The one was calm, contemplative, a lover of solitude, temperamentally frail and curiously shy. The other, on the contrary, was all life and activity; extraordinarily endowed with bodily strength, and eager to expand it; greedy for action, and ever on the watch for any opportunity of rendering service: in fine, John was of sanguine nature, whereas Comollo was of phlegmatic type. And yet never was there a better assorted friendship than theirs, and few have ever yielded such fine results. Who gained the most from it? John tells us that it was himself, and we ought to believe him. It is an undoubted fact that Comollo's influence over John was of the deepest. His spirit, which was naturally impetuous and vehement, became, through observing his friend's gentleness, one of the calmest, the most peaceful and the most self-controlled that has ever been seen.

One day when Comollo had registered another cuff as uncomplainingly as before, Bosco flung himself upon his aggressors and treated them to a heavy trouncing.

" Your strength is alarming," said his grateful friend, " but God never gave it to you for the sake of dealing hard thumps. He wants us to love and to forgive one another, and to return good for evil."

A right Salesian programme. John remembered it afterwards and tried to live up to it; and in future, at the Seminary, there was never a candidate as sedate and smiling as he was.

Nor was this the only good quality which his friendship with Comollo elicited. That excellent young man's companionship inspired him at church and at the children's catechism, and made amendment seem like a game in all circumstances and even in the slightest; and Comollo's pure heart, ever poured into his friend's, may be said, after mother Margaret's education and the lessons learnt from Don Calosso, to have been the chief influence in the training of John's. A mother, an old priest, a friend. Happy they who, in the dawn of life, having to learn docility from submission to its inevitable discipline, encounter three such potent persuaders of the heart!

Not long afterwards, it was partly owing to their invaluable assistance that he victoriously overcame an inward crisis which severely shook his vocation. Hitherto, by hook or by crook he had managed, through self-denial and self-sacrifice, to cope with his expenses during the humanities; but, before entering the Major Seminary, he asked himself anxiously how he could pay for his board and lodging there. No more extras could be earned there; neither the rules nor the scanty leisure provided by the house would allow it; and an account had to be paid inevitably at the end of each quarter. Never could his poor mother's humble means, even if augmented by certain charities, suffice to meet it. Furthermore — and it is he who tells us this — he had such a strong sense of *amour-propre* that he dreaded lest a parochial life, with its works and successes, should turn his head. To be an assistant priest or rector amidst these faithful populations: that set a man so high that John, knew himself, trembled at the very thought of it. There was only one remedy — the religious life. Whereupon the two chief hindrances vanished. He need not be afraid of having to pay for his board, nor would he have to feel any anxiety for the safety to his soul. He would be welcomed in his poverty and helped all through life to overcome his rebellious nature. It was the Franciscan Order that appealed to him most. The Fathers had a friary at Chieri, and he attended it assiduously. Their simple, frugal life of zeal and prayer charmed him; and he, too, had won the sympathies of the good Friars. But before taking the final step he wanted to consult his confessor. Unluckily, as it turned out, the priest would give him no counsel at all. He would have nothing whatever to do with it, he said; he would not undertake such a responsibility. Helping souls to become better Christians, he was quite ready to do that; but to urge them in one direction rather than another, to point out the path they should take, that was not his affair. What a strange view for an otherwise estimable priest to take of his position as a confessor!

Rebuffed in this way John turned to his own rector, Don Dassano. We must suppose that the reasons given by his parishioner did not convince him, for a few days later the good curé appears to have tackled mother Margaret, urging her to dissuade her son from pursuing his course. " You are no longer young," he said; in a few years you will be feeling rather weary. Who will then receive you, if not John, now

become an assistant or rector? Your interest lies in getting him to give up his plan. And his interest lies the same way: gifted as he is, he cannot fail to succeed and to bring you much credit." The old mother listened to what her pastor had to say, and even thanked him warmly for the step he had taken; but she kept her thoughts to herself.

Next day she was at Chieri.

" Father Dassano called to see me yesterday," she told her son. " So you want to be a Franciscan? "

" Yes, mother. I suppose you have no objection to it."

" God forbid! I only beg you to make a thorough examination of your vocation: then, do as you will. The important thing is to save your soul. The good priest wanted me to dissuade you from the proposal for my own sake, for my old age. That has nothing to do with it, whatever. Do not worry about my future. I don't want anything from you, nor do I expect anything. Bear this in mind: I was born poor, I have lived poor, and I wish to die poor. And this is certain: if you happen to decide on being a parish priest, and if you were to become rich, I should never cross your threshold. Never forget that."

There are mothers, says René Bazin, with the soul of a priest: this mother was one of them. When he was past seventy Don Bosco still remembered this solemn warning, and once more he saw that humble countrywoman before him with her great heart, emphasising with her look and gesture and bearing and tone of voice the energy of her speech.

A few days later — about Easter, 1834 — Bosco passed the examination at Turin for his admission to the Franciscan novitiate. He was received unanimously, and he would certainly have entered the Friary of Pace of Chieri, had not a providential incident occurred which upset all his plans. On arriving at Castelnuovo to bid a farewell to the curé of his parish, John happened to meet the farrier of the district, one Savio, who, unsuspecting of the role he was about to play in the business, asked him why he was there.

" I have come to ask the curé for a testimonial of character and conduct. I am going to be a Franciscan."

" Indeed, why? "

" I can't manage to go on with my studies. My mother is too poor. This way, all will be for the best."

" Have you had your lunch? "

" No."

" Then come home with me. Have something to eat, and this afternoon I will have a talk with the priest. Who knows but that he may be able to help you? "

John accepted the good man's invitation and, between two mouthfuls, received this advice: " I am very afraid of your acting hastily. In your place I should take counsel with Don Cafasso. Certainly he is not an old man, but he is a very holy one."

Don Cafasso, of whom we shall have a good deal to say in the next chapter, was a compatriot of John Bosco, and his elder by four years. He had only just been ordained priest, but since he had left the Seminary he enjoyed a reputation for sanctity which drew towards him many who were uneasy or disturbed in mind. He was then living at Turin, at the Ecclesiastical College of St. Francis of Assisi, where, under sound teachers, he was going through a finishing course of sacred studies and becoming trained in such zealous works as catechizing the sick in hospitals, the inmates of reformatories and prisoners. There it was that John came, as soon as he had a free day, to submit his case. A critical moment. A whole career — and what a career! — hangs upon the decision of this young priest of twenty-three; and he gives it unhesitatingly and very calmly, as if the future of his interlocutor were suddenly revealed to him.

" Go on with your studies," said he, " and go into the Seminary; and then be ready to follow God's leadings."

Dear Don Cafasso, how often in the course of our story shall we meet with his attractive personality! How often shall we find him entering into our hero's life, ever with some blessing in his hand! But never was he more providentially inspired than on that May morning of 1834, when his counsel determined for all time the destiny of the youth whose clear glory was one day to outshine that of his counsellor.

Fifteen months after this decisive interview, John donned the cassock at the hands of the rector of the church of Castelnuovo, where he had been baptised twenty years previously: it was on October 25, 1835. Five days later he took leave of his mother, at Becchi, to go into the Seminary.

On the eve of his departure, when his friends and acquaintances who had come to greet the young seminarist had withdrawn, she took

her beloved son aside and, with her eyes looking into his, with an accent which he remembered well until the last days of his life, made him this touching appeal: " Now you have put on your cassock, my dear John. You can surmise the joy and the sweetness that fill my heart with this event. But remember that it is not the habit that honours your state, but the practice of virtue. If you should unfortunately ever come to have any doubts as to your vocation, I beg you to do nothing unworthy of your cloth. Take it off at once, for I would rather my son should be a poor peasant than a priest who neglects his duty. When you came into the world, I consecrated you to the Blessed Virgin; when you began your schooling, I recommended you almost exclusively to the Madonna; now I beg you to belong to her entirely. Love those who love her, and, if you are some day a priest, constantly promote devotion to the good Mother . . ."

She broke down in her emotion. Her son wept.

" Mother," he said, after a long silence, " before leaving you for my new life, let me thank you for all you have done for me. Your counsels are engraved upon my soul, and they will be my treasure from which I shall draw every day."

Next day, in the evening, John Bosco passed through the heavy doorway of the Major Seminary at Chieri; he was to live there for six years, fed and entertained, one may say, by everyone's charity. This it was that had provided him from head to foot on the day of his clothing: a local worthy had provided his cassock, the mayor his hat, the rector his cloak, another parishioner his shoes. His first year in the Seminary was paid for by an eminent priest of Turin whom we shall soon meet with again, Don Guala, the director of the Ecclesiastical College, a man as rich as he was beneficent. During the years that followed, this is how Bosco managed: in his first year he won an exhibition of sixty francs, which was awarded to the pupil who had obtained the highest marks for conduct and work; from his second year of philosophy, he was granted the half-bounty which was often conferred upon studious and hard-working seminarists; in his second year of theology he was appointed sacristan, an office which earned him sixty francs; the rest of his board — which still amounted to something — was discharged by Don Cafasso.

This is the second time that we meet him on our path, and it will

not be the last one. These two lives, that of recipient and benefactor, of admirer and pattern, of director and penitent, were so intertwined for a quarter of a century as sometimes to deceive the keenest-eyed observers. At one time, some went as far as to say that one of the two did but carry on the work of the other, an Eliseus who had inherited the mantle of Elias. What a blunder both in history and in psychology! Never were two natures or two temperaments more opposite than these. Their missionary mottoes show it clearly. Cafasso used to say: "Good must be deferred, unless it can be done as it deserves — very well indeed." But Bosco maintained this: "The best is the enemy of the good. Let us do what little good we can, at once, and as well as we can." Two spirits, and two schools. But let us not anticipate.

At the Chieri Seminary he found himself close upon the traces of his benefactor, and inhaled the persistent fragrance of his virtues. It is he who tells so: "More than anything else, what bound me most strongly to these walls was the name of Don Cafasso. The odour of his virtues still lingered in the Seminary. His charity for his companions, his submissiveness to his superiors, his patience in bearing with his neighbour's defects, his care to give no offence to anyone, his pleasure in helping everyone, his indifference as to his diet, his resignation to violent changes of weather, his readiness in taking the catechism for little children, his bearing which was always edifying, his zeal for study and piety — all these virtues blossomed out with as much of radiance in the Seminary as they left fragrance behind them..."

Such early sanctity was all the more meritorious since it scarcely found, in this austere house, the supernatural helps which it might have hoped for. Jansenism, against which these two men of God had to struggle all their lives, had passed that way, and its practices still flourished. There was compulsory confession once a fortnight, and Communion was permitted on Sundays and feast-days: that was all. Whoever hungered for the Eucharist or regarded it as his daily food, as a spiritual tonic against temptations, had to go without his light breakfast and to slip off stealthily to an outside church nearby and rejoin his companions at the lecture after the collation. Young Bosco rarely failed to infringe the rule in this way to feed upon what he called the most potent sustenance of his vocation.

At the Seminary he had unhappily once more to deplore the delibe-

rately distant attitude of the directors towards their pupils. He could not be persuaded that such behaviour was suited to their spiritual needs, for he felt too keenly the moral solitude in which this estrangement from the superiors of the house kept all these ardent and glowing youths, sometimes exposed to the rough assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil. " I loved my superiors deeply," he writes in his *Memories,* " and they indeed returned my affection; but my heart was ill at ease on finding them so inaccessible to the seminarists. Only two visits were paid to the superior and to the other directors, one when the holidays began, the other on leaving in July. Otherwise we never entered their own rooms, unless it was for some " dressing-down." The directors took turns in superintending the refectory or the walks; when once their weekly duty was over, we saw no more of them. I may say that this was the greatest sorrow I felt at the Seminary. How often I wanted to speak to them, to ask for advice or to submit a perplexity to them: it was impossible. And worse than that: if one of our superiors happened to cross the playground while the seminarists were enjoying themselves, though we knew not why, we scurried away to right and left. It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good. This sort of thing had at least the advantage of kindling my heart more warmly with the desire of becoming a priest more quickly, to mingle with young folk and to get to know them intimately, so as to help them in all circumstances to shun what is bad."

In place of his masters, to sustain the Christian progress of his soul he had always Comollo, who joined the Major Seminary a year after himself. Up to the end, which was unfortunately near, their friendship bore all its fruits. Between these two privileged souls there was a constant exchange of service and of good example. Supporting one another, they ascended Godwards with surer and more rapid steps. Each one's contribution of benefits was certainly different, but this was what imparted its charm and interest to their affection: the two young men completed one another. Comollo afforded Bosco the example of his exact obedience, his scrupulous attention to the humblest detail of duty, his charity careful never to wound a neighbour, even in word, his intense piety, sometimes rather too prone to tears and sighs, his almost appalling mortifications, and his faultless behaviour as a seminarist; and Bosco brought Comollo the illumination of a quick intelligence, his untainted

gaiety, his permanent good-humour, his exquisite sense of right measure in everything, his horror of eccentricities, and the happy gift of character which won its way everywhere. " If any seminarists who were but poor specimens of their class failed to get any hold upon me, if I was able to make progress in my vocation, I owe it all to Comollo," he wrote the day after his friend's death. Unhappily, it came only too quickly.

Two years later, at the end of the autumn holidays, Comollo already had a presentiment of it. The season had been a bad one for the country, and the vines gave but poor promise. The two friends looked down upon the vineyard from the top of a hill, and were deploring the misfortune.

" Never mind," said Don Bosco, who was always an optimist, " next year the vintage will be better."

" I hope so," rejoined Comollo. " Happy they who will then enjoy the new wine. You will be one of them."

" What about you? Do you mean to go on drinking plain water, as in the Seminary? "

" Well, next year I reckon on enjoying a much better wine."

" What do you mean by that? "

" Nothing."

" What next? Do you want to go to heaven? "

" Indeed, I feel I am quite unworthy of it; but for some time I have had such a thirst for the things of heaven that I cannot believe that I have much longer to live in this world."

And he was not mistaken. Six months later, on the very morning of the feast of the Annunciation, March 25, he took to his bed, attacked by a fever which the doctors diagnosed wrongly. On Holy Saturday evening he was seized with delirium, complicated with spiritual anguish. Though physically weak, it sometimes took six men to keep him in bed; though his piety was so full of confidence, he uttered cries of terror at the thought of close impending judgement. Then all was calm once more. His body regained its restfulness and his soul its peace; and serenely, on the dawn of Easter Tuesday, fortified for the great passage with Extreme Unction and the Viaticum, hand in hand with his faithful John, who was sobbing at his pillow, he gave back his soul to God in its baptismal whiteness.

This happened on April 2; on the evening of the third, the funeral took place; and the following night occurred an incident witnessed by too many for any doubt to be cast upon it. While Comollo was alive, the two friends — very imprudently, as Bosco confessed afterwards — promised one another that the one who died first would come to quiet the other as to his own eternal salvation. The memory of this promise was agitating John's mind, and that night he could not sleep.

It might have been about midnight, he writes when our dormitory, where about twenty seminarists were sleeping, was suddenly startled by a terrible occurence. It sounded from the bottom of the corridor like the growing noise of a wagon with its heavy team of horses let loose, or else like a train rushing past at express speed. Everything around the seminarists was atremble. The house, the dormitory, the ceilings and the floors appeared to be shaken by a monstrous arm of iron. Then suddenly the door opens, the din enters the domitory, and then follows a host of many coloured lights. At a certain moment, the noise ceases; a sepulchral silence falls; and, amidst the general stupor, comes a voice thrice repeated, heard by many, but understood by John Bosco alone, " Bosco, I am saved." An immense brightness then fills the whole of the dormitory; the tumult is repeated with fresh violence, and then it all dies away and disappears in the silence of the night.

Horrified, the seminarists had leapt up in disorder and taken refuge near the cell of the superintendent, and they dared not move. Lying in his bed John tried to calm them and to help them to recover their mental balance by repeating the comforting words of the apparition, " Comollo is saved." But it was no good, and the dormitory waited for the dawn, quite upset by this tragic irruption from the other world.

This was not the only event that marked the decease of the holy cleric Comollo. A few days afterwards, meditating on his inconsolable sorrow, John compared it in memory with a trifling happening of his childhood, when the death of a tame blackbird, devoured by a cat, had cast him into a sad state of depression. For several days the world seemed to cease to exist, and no one succeeded in assuaging his grief. But one evening, illumined by some kind of inward light, he was filled with shame at such an excess of lamentation, and blushed over such a morbid attachment to a creature, and he vowed never again to fasten his heart so strongly upon anyone or anything in this world. The purity

and gentleness and the charm of Comollo made him break his vow; and for the second time he abandoned his heart to the ephemeral and transitory: but it was also for the last time. The great blessing of such a friendship, the marvellous grace of such a death, were that they detached his soul for ever from the goods of this world. Thereafter, the world, the young with whom he had to do, the creatures with which he was brought into contact, the successes achieved by his faith, the honours evoked by his holiness, might offer him their cup of flattery: but never would he raise it to his lips. At the age of twenty-one his soul was finally won over to God, to good, to the eternal.

Yet this heroic act never effaced from his memory the recollection of his unrivalled friend. Their affection outlasted death. One night in 1847, his mother heard him carrying on a long conversation in his room with some unknown person.

" With whom were you talking last night? " she asked next morning.

" With Louis Comollo," he answered shortly, keeping to himself the supernatural secrets his ever-faithful friend had come to tell him from beyond the grave.

John spent fully six years at the Seminary, two of philosophy and four of theology. The day before his ordination, when his masters made their last report on him, they wrote opposite his name to describe the success of his work, *Plus quam optime*; and to give an estimate of his character, " Full of zeal, sure to succeed, and that with excellence." This sober marginal note but feebly represented the reality. As a cleric, John Bosco was indeed a model seminarist. Scrupulously faithful to the humblest detail of duty, he submitted with docility to the rules of the house, to its time-table and bell; whatever they enjoined, he carried out to the minute. A hard worker and quick-witted, he had soon mastered the preparation for the day, and then devoted his leisure to reading or to learning foreign languages. The quantity of Doctors of the Church and of other ecclesiastical writers which he managed to devour during these six years is inconceivable. The History of the Church was easily his favourite subject. Later on, we shall find him grappling with various errors, Protestantism, Liberalism, Caesarianism and Jansenism, armed with a formidable array of evidences: he had acquired it in his voluminous reading at the Seminary. A splendid companion, he was always ready

to help a fellow-student, whether with the repetition of a lecturer's explanation or the unravelling of an " unseen," whether with the renewal of a tonsure or a shave, or with the mending of a cassock, a cap, or of an old shoe. Though very devout, there was nothing eccentric in his devotion: it was simple, with neither languidness nor strain about its manner, rather restrained in practice, but deep and rich in faith and love; his whole life bore the mark of a perfect balance of faculties. Furthermore, he was the most gay and lively of companions, ever ready with anecdote on his lips, or with something made by the deftness of his fingers, or with some fresh fancy of his ardent imagination: he was always the life and soul of his company. He appeared on entering the surroundings of the Seminary to have made his own the motto inscribed upon the sun-dial of the court: *Afflictis lentae; celeres gaudentibus horae.* " Time lags for the sad at heart, for the joyous it flies." To live for six years between the same walls, that was enough to alarm an exuberant temperament: they passed in a twinkling for him and others, thanks to the fine humour that he always spread around him.

But his infectious gaiety never descended to dissipation; during the hours for work, for silence and for prayer, his smile gave way to gravity, calmness and recollection. His companions also remarked this in him which indicates a rare gift of self-control. No one ever saw him in a temper or heard him complain of the rule or diet of the house. He took everything as it came with a smile, and in the daily trials that tempted his will he adored the holy will of God.

He did not attain such a degree of virtue in twenty-four hours. Nature had more than once rebelled and tried to regain control. Holiness ever involves a stiff struggle and is never to be found in one's cradle like the royalty of a crown prince. John knew that as well as anyone, and there is no unpleasantness in discovering nature breaking through his watchfulness now and then. How hard, for instance, he found it to overcome his love of cards! What an effort it cost to tear himself gradually from his juggler's tricks! How difficult it was to restrain his natural impetuosity! In his *Memories* he records how, one morning in the holidays, his friends caught him wildly pursuing a hare driven from its form, a mad race in which the fugitive was beaten for want of breath. But while the lookers-on were cheering the winner and thinking nothing else, he was covered with shame and confusion on

realising that to get the better of the runaway he had flung off his cassock and left it at the foot of a tree; and he was vexed to the heart at such an unclerical act.

And yet during the holidays he continued to be the same model seminarist as he had been at Chieri. At that time the Seminary holidays were interminable: they lasted from St. John the Baptist till All Saint's Day. It was, indeed, a problem to know how to live during these four months. Bosco solved it by accepting invitations to right and to left, sometimes from his old masters the Moglias, often staying with his brother Joseph, and mostly with the good and learned rector of Castelnuovo at the presbytery. There he found not only the most hearty hospitality, but a library excellently well stocked, especially with Italian and Latin classics, upon which he drew largely to complete his rather disturbed humanities.

One year, during three months of the holidays, he was lucky enough to be taken as a Greek tutor for some pupils of the Jesuits, who were staying away from Turin with some of their professors owing to the cholera. This interim secured him two advantages: first, he again came into touch with the language which he had studied at Chieri merely superficially, and, next, he became convinced that these boys were not to be his portion. These youths were certainly charming, well-educated, quick-witted, but careless and spoilt by easy circumstances; they offered too restricted a field for the zeal and ardour of one bent upon radically changing the heart.

How unlike they were to his small and great friends of Castelnuovo and Chieri and Becchi! All these were still true to him. At the Seminary, on Thursday, when they were on leave, they ran to the parlour to chatter, to get good advice, to be taken to chapel. Several went on asking him for lessons throughout the school year; and, during the holidays, at Castelnuovo, he had never done with unravelling difficult passage in in the classics for such boys and young men. No doubt that brought him in a little money, which helped him to live; but above all it enabled him to get into touch with their souls. " He lived entirely for the young," writes one of his companions of those days. And the young repaid him in full. On Sundays, when the seminarists marched in devout files from the Seminary to the cathedral for High Mass, John's admirers lay in wait for him on the way, at the corner of the square, merely to

see him, to catch a glance by stealth and go away happy. " Do you see the one with curly hair, this side, to the right? " said one of them to another who did not know him. " Yes, what then? " " Well, he is the friend of all of us. If only you knew how good he is! "

A simple declaration, but how full of meaning! John Bosco was good to all these boys; he loved them instinctively, because he was grieved at their neglect; he loved them as a matter of vocation, because he knew that he was called to serve them.

It was at the end of his Seminary course, during one night in the holidays, that a second dream, as expressive as his first one, came to confirm God's will for him. At the bottom of his brother's farm stretched a broad valley which, in his eyes, suddenly assumed the appearance of a populous city. In its streets and squares swarmed a youthful throng, playing, shouting and cursing. The oaths were such as to fill him with horror. He threw himself upon them and bade them be quiet, and, when they did nothing of the kind, he threatened them with blows. It was no good. Then he took action and handled the most shameless of them roughly. These returned blow for blow, and that vigorously. Overwhelmed by numbers, the cleric took flight, but his retreat was intercepted by a mysterious being who ordered him to go back to the wretches and correct them with persuasion. The dreamer's only reply was to show his bruises. Then the unknown one presented him to a Lady, who came towards him. " This is my Mother," He said, " follow her counsel." The lovely apparition looked at him with great kindness and murmured: " If you want to win over these young vagabonds, do not treat them with blows and kicks, but capture them with gentleness and persuasion." And this he did. Then, as in his first dream, a double change occurred. The boys first turned into wild beasts, and a moment afterwards into the gentlest of lambs.

A dream means just nothing at all or so very little. And yet, when we see this child, this boy, this young man continually obsessed with such an idea, we cannot help surmising that Heaven may have something to do with it. And this surmise turns into certainty when, as may be noted on many future occasions, events following the course of the dream fulfil it. The visionary then changes into one who is predestinate. There are precocious children who, at an early age, show by their inborn gifts what they will one day be: musicians, poets, painters. Such is the

case of John Bosco: heaven and earth conspired to mark out his way. A secret power urged him imperiously towards the young; an invincible instinct impelled the young towards him; and this twofold urge of the pastor towards the flock and of the flock towards their pastor interpreted in action the visions in which Christ and his Mother, full of pity for the moral wretchedness of the little ones, appeared to order everything so that this flock, whether scattered or astray, might at last find their shepherd and their fold.

While awaiting this hour, the labourer went on finishing his final training at the seminary of Chieri. He was ordained subdeacon at Turin in September, 1840; in the spring of 1841, he received the diaconate on Saturday of Passion-week; and finally, on May 26, the feast of St. Philip Neri, he went into retreat, at Turin, with the Vincentian Fathers, to prepare for his ordination as priest. In a poor little note-book, which he kept to the end of his life, he jotted down the resolutions prompted by grace during these days of benediction. Here is a faithful copy of them:

" A priest never goes to heaven or hell alone. If he is faithful to his vocation, he goes to heaven with the souls which his good example has saved; if he does ill, and scandalises his brethren, he goes to hell with the souls damned through his bad example. This thought will help me to strain every nerve to keep the following resolutions:

1. I will never take a walk except for some real necessity.

2. I will be scrupulous in the use of my time.

3. When the salvation of souls is at stake, I will be always ready to suffer, to act and to humiliate myself.

4. May the charity and gentleness of St. Francis de Sales illumine every step I take.

5. I will always show myself satisfied with the food set before me, unless it be really harmful to my health.

6. I will always add water to my wine, and drink it only as a remedy, i.e., on such days and in such measure as health requires.

7. Since work is potent weapon against the enemies of my salvation, I will give only five hours a night to sleep. In the day, especially ofter lunch, I will take no rest, except when ill.

8. Every day I will devote some time to meditation and to spiritual reading. During the day, I will make a short visit, or at any rate a

prayer, to the Blessed Sacrament. My preparation for Mass shall take at least a quarter of an hour, and so shall my thanksgiving.

9. Apart from hearing confessions, and cases of strict necessity, I will never stop to talk with women."

It was Mgr. Fransoni, Archbishop of Turin, who conferred the priesthood upon the young deacon. He knew him a little and esteemed him much, according to the reports of the Superior of the seminary of Chieri; but he was far from suspecting the important part that would be played in his church by the young priest whom he had ordained in his private chapel on that Saturday, June 5, on the eve of Trinity Sunday.

Next day, in the church of St. Francis of Assisi, at the altar of the Guardian Angel, to the left of the high altar, assisted by his friend and benefactor, Don Cafasso, professor of casuistry at the Ecclesiastical College adjoining that sanctuary, Father John Bosco celebrated his first Mass. He wanted it to be quite simple, without display or fuss, and thoroughly recollected, to enable his soul to thank God for having brought him to the zenith of his childish dreams. With what deep devotion must he have repeated the liturgical passages which so marvellously expressed the bewilderment and the gratitude of his mind. Thrice — at the Introit, at the Offertory, and after the Communion — the Church sang her thanksgiving to the Holy Trinity for the infinite mercy with which it surrounds mankind. And then the young priest must have borne in mind the long chain of graces which had facilitated his accession to the priesthood.

" O God, the strength of them that hope in thee," said the Collect; and the celebrant remembered how, to overcome many humanly insurmountable hindrances, he had only to await God's hour with patience and to hope against hope. " How incomprehensible are his judgements, and how unsearchable his ways," cried St. Paul in the Epistle for the feast, the ejaculation of man's nothingness when face to face with the leading of divine wisdom, giving fine expression to the deep and touching astonishment of the young shepherd of yesterday who, in the name of the Lord, would be leading another flock to the pastures.

Of these expectant sheep he thought that morning, and his mind was filled with fervour. And then, at the moment of the Holy Sacrifice, when the priest concentrates himself upon imploring God's graces for

himself and for those who are dearest to him, he begged the Lord to grant him for his ministry — *the word of power.* " I think," he wrote afterwards in his *Memories.* " that my prayer was answered." Yes, indeed, and that magnificently. His words, whether in public or in private, found their way straight to many hearts, but especially to those of the young, whom it apparently never failed to sway.

During the Holy Sacrifice, between the Elevation and the Communion, when the bread has been changed into the Lord's body, the Church reserves a pause for the celebrant's own private prayer: it is at the *Memento* for the dead. Here the young priest's thoughts lingered awhile to recommend to God the names of his deceased benefactors of Castelnuovo and Chieri. Above all did one figure stand out in his memory, that of old Don Calosso, his first Latin master, whose generosity desired to spare him his many delays. His pupil saw once more, as in a flash of lightning, the kind face of the dear old man; he lived over again the scene of his return from the Mission, the unforgettable weeks spent at the presbytery at Murialdo, the happiness he had felt on finding the Catholic priest of his dreams. And the celebrant was filled to the full with restrained emotion, and his ardent prayers went far beyond space and time to thank the benefactor who had set his footsteps on the way to that altar.

Next day, Monday, he celebrated his second Mass at the church of the Consolata — Our Lady of Victories of Turin — " to thank the Blessed Virgin, " he writes, " for the innumerable favours she had obtained for me from her Son." And the following Thursday, on the feast of Corpus Christi, he responded to the desire of his own people by celebrating High Mass at Castelnuovo and by presiding at the procession. To honour the occasion, there were great festivities at the rectory, to which the archpriest had invited all John's relations, all the surrounding clergy and the chief people of the place.

But the new priest very quickly withdrew from these noisy demonstrations of esteem to meet his mother alone again and to review their memories together. At nightfall they both departed to go up to the Becchi! How often had they trodden these roads and paths during the last fifteen years, both haunted by the wonderful dream which had now become a reality! The last slope which they had to climb crossed the field where, one winter night, he had heard in a dream the voice of the

Madonna clearly telling him his way. By mysterious but sure paths he, too, had been divinely led. The hand of a woman, the hand of a Mother — the hightest of all woman, the tenderest of all mothers — had grasped his tiny hand and, through many a trial, led him to this summit: the priesthood. He had only to let well alone and never to despair. A wonderful story! It came back to him in this hour of quiet recollection, amidst the humble background of his early days, and now, as a man, his heart was stirred to the innermost. Words failed to express his feelings, and little Johnny, the shepherd boy of long ago, now a priest, could only manifest his ineffable gratitude in tears.

Just a few more steps, and the pair crossed the threshold of the cottage which had seen so many scenes of joy and sadness. Mother Margaret lighted the candle, got everything ready for the night's rest, and then, just as twenty years ago, the prayers of these two pure hearts went up to heaven. When they arose, the old mother, who had been rather silent during this day of thrills, took her son's hands in her own and said in a grave and sweet tone: " Well, now you are a priest, Johnny dear! Now you will be saying Mass every day. But be sure to remember this: beginning to say Mass means beginning to suffer. You won't notice it at first, but some day, in time, you will see your mother is right. Every morning, I am sure, you will pray for me. That is all I ask for. Henceforward, think, of nothing but the saving of souls, and don't worry about me."

Let us close this chapter with this scene of purely supernatural beauty: it gives the key of a whole career. Later on, when this son will astound us with the vastness of his enterprises, with his passion for God and for souls, and with his calm and intrepid faith, we shall think of the humble peasant woman of Becchi, of her illiteracy but high-mindedness, of the mother who slowly and patiently, during fifteen years of poverty and trials, trained the heart of this priest.

The humble beginnings of great work

A few months after his ordination, in October 1841, at the end of his last holidays, Father John reflected upon the course his life should take. What sort of sacerdotal work should he accept? He had three offers. A noble family of Genoa invited him to become a tutor at about £50 a year, with all found; his fellow-countrymen begged him to undertake the vacant post of assistant priest at Murialdo, the little village upon which Becchi depended; and lastly, the archpriest of Castelnuovo, his great friend and benefactor, Don Cinzano, was eager to have him as his coadjutor. To settle the question and to make his first selection entirely according to God's will, Don Bosco once more had recourse to his saintly fellow-countryman, Don Cafasso, who said: " Don't accept anything. Come here to Turin and finish your priestly training at the Ecclesiastical College.

What was this College, *Il Convitto Ecclesiastico,* as it is still named? It was the work of an eminent priest of Turin, Father Guala, who, immediately after the political upheavals of the Revolution and the Empire, saw that the most pressing need was to prepare for the christianising of civilisation a well-educated priesthood, both pious and zealous, which alone could restore it to saving principles and to the practice of forgotten virtues. These ideas about the training of the clergy to be men of worth he had taken over from his master and counsellor, the Servant of God, Bruno Lantieri, the Founder of the Oblates of Mary in Piedmont; and in those troubled times he was one of the few workers thoroughly imbued with sound Roman doctrines. At that time, indeed, Gallicanism flourished in its highest glory; and

the famous " four articles " were taught compulsorily in all the chairs of theology: error had crossed the Alps with the imperial armies — and it had not come alone.

Jansenism, too, had invaded these northern valleys of Italy and propagated its noxious rigorism amongst her honest inhabitants. Both flocks and pastors were more or less impregnated with it. Whither would it lead? Far astray, and always in the wrong direction. The evil could only be cured by attacking it at its roots, that is to say, by filling the minds of the masters in Israel with sound doctrine. Don Guala had set himself to this work as soon as he could by opening a free course of casuistry at his own house. He was appointed rector of St. Francis of Assisi in 1808 and transferred his professorship to this parish, where he quietly went on with his work. Piedmont was then living under the rod of Napoleon, and he had to proceed with the greatest caution. Finally, after the treaty of Vienna and the return of the princes of Savoy in 1817, Don Guala tried to realise his project to the full. Close tc the church of St. Francis of Assisi was the old Franciscan Friary, which had been turned into barracks during the Napoleonic occupation. Don Guala asked for public authority to use it in his own way; this was granted him, and, later on, civil status for his Institute as being of recognised public use. From 1818 onwards the Ecclesiastical College began to work with a dozen freshmen, who were soon to increase to the number of sixty.

This College would first of all ensure a sound complement of theological studies to the younger clergy; then it was to gather together under the same roof and the same discipline these priests who hitherto had had to put up anywhere as they could at great expense, not always protected from certain dangers; and lastly, it enabled the masters during these two or three years of studies to observe the aptitudes of their pupils from close at hand, and thus get them appointed in due time to where they could do most for the glory of God. For between the lectures on moral theology, held one in the morning and the other in the evening — the morning conference by Don Guala, the evening one by Don Cafasso — the young priests engaged in the most frequent occupations of their sacerdotal state: parish services, visits to hospitals and prisons, catechisms in the town, etc. The Institute was put under the patronage of two favourite Saints of the devout in Italy, St. Francis

de Sales and St. Charles Borromeo, both of them the originators of similar institutions.

The rule was a very mild one, intended to train the young clerics gradually to the indispensable habits of the sacerdotal life: morning and evening prayers, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, recitation of the rosary, half an hour's meditation, a quarter of an hour's spiritual reading; all these in common; weekly confession, a slight mortification on Fridays, silence except during recreation, monthly recollection, study in common, a daily evening walk in pairs, far from much frequented places; and public shows and going into cafés were both strictly forbidden. Each scholar paid a very modest sum for his board; Don Guala's considerable private means and the legacies left to the corporate body of the Institute enabled the College to admit more than one pupil without payment.

Of course Don Bosco was among these. He was to stay there three years which proved providential in his case, for not only did they endow him with the considerable amount of knowledge which was to enrich his preaching and his pen, but they furthermore brought him into contact with the needs which finally determined his vocation as the apostle of the young.

In the very first weeks of his residence at the College, Father John made close acquaintance with the state of moral neglect in which most of the youth of the masses wallowed. Turin was then a growing capital; it drew to itself from Piedmont and Lombardy numbers of poor children and youths recruited for building operations, mostly mortar labourers, masons' apprentices and building carpenters. They found quarters where they could live, almost always wretchedly, in gangs of five or six, in basements or filthy garrets. Yet these folk were any rate an army of workers; but alongside of it, nearly everywhere, adjoining the citadel, on the banks of the Po, on the waste ground surrounding a rising building, swarmed crowds of idle children neglected by their parents or else taught to become beggars. If the young priest climbed up to the attics, he met with an equally distressing spectacle: families of eight, ten or twelve, heaped together in a miserable garret, breathing poisoned air, and, in their promiscuity, teaching one another every kind of vice. In all these surroundings a brood of gaol-birds was being incubated, and one fine day some of them would be hatched out in one of the four reformatories belonging to the capital. How often did Don Bosco visit

them, following in the footsteps of Don Cafasso! What struck him most in these desolate houses was the number of youths to be met with, lads of all ages, the elder completing the corruption of the younger boys. Here souls were prematurely lost, and yonder, in the Little House of Divine Providence, the vast hospital founded by Saint Cottolengo, it was the body that fell into decay, eaten away by diseases which were the result of evil living.

What a painful spectacle was afforded by these abandoned youths with neither guide nor shepherd, the victims of a world of unruly passions, of a reckless social environment and of families with no regard for duty! Sometimes, as he took his evening stroll through the slums to meditate in an adjoining field, the young priest encountered bands of little urchins running loose and uncontrolled: here they were fighting, there they were begriming one another; here they were playing pitch and toss, there gambling with cards, and the lips of half-grown boys were defiled with oaths and foul words. The priest approached these gangs, but without success: some ran away, and others jibed at him, and the rest went on playing their dubious games without flinching. Then Don Bosco would stand still, very sorrowful and sad; and yet a ray of hope flashed into his soul. That scene he knew well to its least details: he had already come across it, exactly like that, three times before. It was then a dream: now it was a reality. But the dream did not stop there: in the end the little wild beasts had turned into tractable sheep, when their heaven-sent friend had approached them with a kindness and love which they had never known before. Who can tell whether that hour will not strike, thought Don Bosco. And he returned to the College, praying the Blessed Virgin to hasten it.

At last the hour actually struck, and that on one of Mary's days, on December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of 1841. In the sacristy of the church of St. Francis of Assisi, Don Bosco in his Mass vestments was waiting for a server. Being very recollected, he had not noticed the entrance of a big lad of about sixteen, badly clothed, who had been urged on by curiosity, and was now inspecting, with the astonishment accompanying a novel experience, the room, its arrangement, and the priest so strangely garbed, the scene that made such an impressive and austere whole.

" What are you doing there? " asked the sacristan in grumbling

tones. " Don't you see the priest is waiting for a server? Come look alive; take the missal and serve Mass."

" But I don't know how," replied the lad.

" Then why have you come in here? Whoever sends me such scamps as this, dropping in anywhere as if they were at home? Off with you, and quick about it! "

With these words he caught up a feather-broom and gave chase to the rascal, who did not know the way out and, rushing through a wrong opening, banged into a closed door and returned into the sacristy with the angry sacristan in pursuit, and finally, regaining the way by which he had come, escaped into the street.

" Why are you beating the boy? " said Don Bosco to the panting sacristan. " I won't have my friends treated like that."

" Your friend, that rogue? "

" As soon as anyone is treated badly, he becomes my friend. Go and fetch the boy for me, he can't be far off. I want to talk to him."

A minute later the crestfallen sacristan returned with his still trembling victim.

" Come here, my friend," said Don Bosco to the boy; " I will do you no harm. What is your name? "

" Bartholomew Garelli."

" Where do you come from? "

" Asti."

" What are you? "

" A mason."

" Are your parents alive? "

" No, both dead."

" How old are you? "

" Sixteen."

" Can you read and write? "

" No."

" Sing or whistle? "

The boy began laughing; the ice was broken: friendship was born.

" Tell me, Bartholomew: have you made your first Communion? "

" Not yet."

" Have you ever been to confession? "

" Yes, long ago, when I was a child."

MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS
(From the original picture commissioned by St. John Bosco).

" Do you say your prayers? "
" I have forgotten them."
" Do you go to Mass on Sundays? "
" Oh yes, almost always."
" Do you go to catechism? "
" I don't dare to."
" Why? "
" For shame. Smaller boys than me know more about it.
" Well, if I explained the catechism to you, would you come? "
" I'd be very glad to."
" When shall we begin? "
" When you like? "
" This evening? "
" Yes."
" And why not now? "
" If you like."

Half an hour later Don Bosco, after his Mass, rejoined his young friend, took him into the choir and began his first lesson in Christian doctrine. Instinctively, the priest understood that a great work would take its rise just there, close to the tabernacle: he knelt down and said a simple *Ave* for the help of the Immaculate Virgin in saving this lad's soul. He put his whole heart into the simple words of that eternal prayer; and with this lesson his apostolate began.

Don Bosco had to start by teaching his pupil the sign of the Cross.

When this first short lesson was over, he said:

" You will come back, won't you? "

" I will, indeed," said the lad.

" Then don't come alone. Bring your pals with you."

Next Sunday, there were nine, six brought by Garelli and two picked up by Don Cafasso, who listened to the simple, affectionate and persuasive words of Don Bosco. A few weeks afterwards, one Sunday evening, Don Bosco was crossing the church during the sermon and found a few mason-apprentices dozing on the steps of a side altar, well hidden in the shadow. " What are you doing there, my friends? " he asked. " We can make nothing of the sermon," answered the boldest of them. " This priest is not preaching to us." " Follow me," said Don Bosco. And in the sacristy he persuaded them to come next Sunday and

join his growing flock. He had now already a dozen interested and attentive young parishioners. A few months later there were eighty, and soon they were over a hundred. They were all good young lads, hard-worked apprentices, and all utterly ignorant of God.

The interest taken in them by this priest, the spiritual good he did them strongly bound them to their great friend, who regularly sought them out as soon as they were free. Then arose the question: where were these noisy young folks to find a refuge when they were not at the catechism? The poor priest's only home was his own study, and his only means were the small Mass stipends he received. An Institution could not be started with such resources as these.

Providence came to his aid. His two Superiors, Don Guala and Don Cafasso, were men of God, who saw at a glance the possibilities of this beginning. They harboured the band in the College yard. It was among their merits that they accepted such a sacrifice, for it meant giving up the calmness and silence of their solitude for the whole of Sunday. Just think of it! More than a hundred youths playing their games under their windows in a yard about the size of a pocket-handkerchief! What an infernal din! But these good priests thought: Never mind. If our young friend turns all these boys into capital Christians, our sacrifice is but a small one.

And thus things went on for nearly three years, 1841-1844, until the day when Don Bosco's course was finished and he had to leave the College. At the request of Don Cafasso, who saw the work had a most promising future and would not have Don Bosco appointed to a country or even to a town charge at any price, the young priest was nominated, at the entreaty of the Marchesa di Barolo, assistant chaplain of a new orphanage, *Il Refugio,* which this great lady had just started.

The Marchesa di Barolo! Let us stop a moment to consider this woman who, in the life of our Saint, was indeed to play a secondary part, but how providential it was! She was a French woman, the daughter of the Marquis de Maulévrier, a direct descendant of the great Colbert. Moreover, she always signed her name as Juliette de Colbert. At the age of seven she lost her mother; and soon afterwards, her grandmother, an aunt, and several of her relations ascended the scaffold in 1793. To escape the same fate, her father had to join the prince's army at Coblentz with his three children. Like some of the other emigrants,

the Maulévriers had for seven years to eat the bitter bread of exile in Holland and Germany, and were hardened in the rough school of adversity. Returning to France on the morrow of Brumaire, the Marquis found his château destroyed and his land wasted. In time, his tenacity succeeded in restoring his domain and, in part, the dowry of his two daughters. In 1807, at the age of twenty-two, Juliette, married the Marchese di Barolo, a Piedmontese nobleman, a page of the Emperor, whom she had probably met at court. When the Marchese's service was over, she went with him to Turin. In 1814, Piedmont had recovered its independence and its legitimate princes, and the Marchesa, while retaining her old love of France, brought to her new fatherland all the service of her hand and heart. Having no children, the Barolos made their family in this world out of those who had none to love them, by pouring out their unclaimed affection and splendid surplus revenues in relief of their poverty. For their house was a great one and extremely wealthy, especially through the produce of the vineyard on the slopes of Barolo, where the finest vines of northern Italy are grown. In 1838, a violent fever attacked the Marchese while on a journey, and cut him off at one stroke. Thus, at the age of fifty-three, the Marchesa found herself left alone with an immense fortune.

She made such a beneficent use of it that her name still remains in benediction in the capital of Piedmont. Who could enumerate the charitable foundations of this great lady? There is a whole quarter of Turin close to the Consolata where you find at every step an institution which originated in her mind or heart. She even treated herself to the luxury of founding two religious Orders, the Sisters, of St. Anne and of St. Magadalen, for the salvation of poor or fallen girls — and what is more, she bore off with a high hand, in six months' proceedings at Rome, the official approval of the Church, won from Gregory XVI and the Cardinal Consultors.

She too had found her vocation to good works in the prisons of the town at the age of thirty-two, one day when she happened to be visiting them and had witnessed with her own eyes the distressing spectacle of the religious indifference and corruption of the woman prisoners. From that time she had vowed to do her best for the redemption of these poor creatures, and every morning, even during her husband's lifetime, she would remain interned for three or four hours with these unhappy woman to

bring them to thoughts of resignation and gentleness, to the love of work and honest living. And she was often successful.

Whoever would have said that this extraordinary woman, who gave most of her time to works of mercy, wore a hair shirt and devoted at least an hour daily to prayer, also held the first *salon in* Turin? She was elegant, cultivated, witty, and charming; all the best writers of the ancient capital — De Maistre, Balbo, Sclopis, D'Azeglio — frequented her receptions. Balzac, on his way through Turin, was eager to be presented to her; Lamartine kept up a correspondence with her; Cavour, the Cavour who preceded the *Risorgimento,* made her one of his best friends and his favourite confidant; and finally, everyone knows how she received into her palace and until the end of his life gentle old Silvio Pellico when, just after his deliverance, he was stranded at Turin, exhausted, prematurely infirm and stripped of everything. At Barolo House they still show you the table where he wrote his famous book, a book that did more for the independence of Italy than two armies in battle array.

The reverse of the medal — for unfortunately it had one — was the Marchesa's quick-tempered peremptoriness. Everything must give way to her desire. The Marchese Tancred must have encouraged this masterful tendency by yielding to all her whims. Left a widow, she found no resistance in her way. Having founded Orders and started many Institutions, she had naturally acquired the habit of command, and it made itself felt. Her ardent imagination and impetuous will often swept her along farther than she intended; but especially did her imperious and opinionated mind often make her unjust in her judgements and tyrannical in her demands. She never allowed any contradiction to obtain a hearing, and every impediment had to be brushed aside at once without any warning. That is all very well with those who are your dependents and know that they may lose heavily by opposing you: but not everyone is in such a position; and once, at any rate, the terrible Marchesa found herself confronted with a will as inflexible as it was gentle, which refused to give way to her. This will, indeed, was that of Don Bosco; but let us not anticipate.

In October, 1844, Don Bosco became the assistant of the principal chaplain of St. Philomena's Refuge, the good Father Borel, who was afterwards to render him such great and numerous services. At this

Father's request, the Marchesa had permitted the young folk to enter into the precincts of the Institute. There, between two walls leading to the first block of rooms, was a passage measuring fourteen feet by sixty-five: it became the second rendezvous of Don Bosco's boys. The chapel consisted of two of the living rooms arranged as well as their situation permitted, and was blessed on December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. It was first of all called the Oratory [1] of St. Francis de Sales. Outside, it was snowing in sheets; but within, between the four walls and and around the makeshift altar, swarmed over a hundred and fifty youths, and the warmth was pleasant and their fevour was intense.

This arrangement proved too good to last. Diffficulties arose with the opening of the Orphanage in the finer weather.

Complaints poured in upon the Marchesa's bureau. Most of them came from the pious women who, on the right and on the left of the two walls of this wretched courtyard, devoted themselves, here to the diseases of the body, and there to those of the soul. They now found that the boys were making a diabolical din; and another time, they feared that, despite the hieght of the walls, one association might have undesirable communications with the other; and now and then some flower in full bloom — a rose or a dahlia or an aster — utterly disappeared from one of the beds!

This was regarded as an unpardonable offence and the boys were made to feel it. The Oratory was ordered to quit as soon as possible; and it did so within a few weeks. Its existence between the two walls had lasted about eight months.

" Where, indeed, can I manage to find a place for my growing family? Why, they now count three hundred, and it is hard to find room for them," thought Don Bosco one May morning when he was wandering haphazardly through the waste spaces of the neighbourhood. There was a fair-sized chapel belonging to the cemetery, which was surrounded with fields covered with thistles. " Well, that will be just the thing for us," thought he; " if only the chaplain consents."

1 Don Bosco borrowed the word *Oratory* from St. Philip Neri, who gathered together Roman boys in an *Oratorio* for religious instruction and singing: hence the modern musical *Oratorio*. In Don Bosco's mind the word implies a building with a chapel, playing field, and classrooms for evening religious instructions and amusements.

The chaplain was a good old man of sixty-three, who agreed at once. " Yes, Don Bosco, yes, indeed. Bring your young friends. I shall be glad to see them enjoying themselves." And thus it was that, on May 25, at about two o'clock in the afternoon, a troop of lads of all ages descended upon these waste lands. There was plenty of room and perfect solitude here. What a change for the boys from the narrow corridor between a couple of walls! How mad with joy they were, not knowing how to express their delight loudly enough.

But alas! they had not reckoned with the good chaplain's housekeeper. Unhappily he was away that Sunday evening, and she was mistress of the house. Suddenly she appeared in the doorway, defiant with her cap, her hands upon her hips, and with insults on her lips. At the noise made by some of the boys in chasing one another with a ball, one of her hens which was sitting in a shabby basket, fled in terror. She was just furious. " Hullo! " she shouted to Don Bosco. " A pretty mess you are making with your rapscallions! Who ever heard of anything like it! But just wait for Don Tesio: this is the last Sunday that you will be seen here."

" But, my good woman," replied Don Bosco with gentleness, " are you certain of being here yourself next Sunday? We are in the hands of God." [1] Then he turned to his boys and said: " Stop your games, my children, and come to the chapel for the catechism and rosary."

After the service, he ran into Don Tesio, who was just back, and had been thoroughly lectured by his servant with her calumnies; and Don Bosco was grieved to hear that the permission given to his boys to play in that quiet place was now withdrawn. The Oratory's stay at St. Peter in Chains had only lasted one short Sunday afternoon. Once more their nest had fallen to the ground and the little nestlings had nowhere to fly to for their songs.

To comfort all these young people good Father Borel then preached his famous sermon on the cabbages. " Cabbages, you see, my children, are no good unless they are frequently transplanted. It is the same with you. Every time you have changed your quarters, you have grown stout-

1 Though Don Bosco did not know it, his reply contained a providential warning. Soon afterwards, both the good old priest and his testy servant were dead.

er; your number has increased and so has your desire to be better Christians. Be of good cheer. Don't worry; the Lord is watching over you; let us leave ourselves in His hands and trust in Him. He is thinking of your future home and soon He will show it to you."

In fact, a few weeks afterwards, we find the Oratory transplanted to the Dora Mills. There was a little church dedicated to St. Martin, a chapel of ease rather than a parish church. Every Sunday Mass was said there, and then the chapel was empty for the rest of the day. The municipality, at Don Bosco's request granted him the use of the building in the afternoon. He could teach the catechism in it as he wished. It was not much, but it was something. For want of anything better, he welcomed it and kept it up despite the difficulties inseparable from the position: a single Mass on Sunday in a church so full that his children could scarcely find a free corner in it — no shelter in bad weather — and as a playground, only the little open space before the church or the street running in front of it, constantly traversed by carriages, pedestrians and horses breaking through the freshly begun fences.

To these worries was added the dissatisfaction of the neighbours, whose tranquility was disturbed. The millers, their boys and the carters, furious at being invaded every Sunday by this pack of noisy urchins, began by teasing them with abuse flung from their windows; then, seeing they remained calm, despite these volleys of insult, they indited a long letter to the Municipal Council, giving the poor lads a very black character. This was enough to alarm the Mayor and to get the use of the church of St. Martin withdrawn from Don Bosco. On the first of January next — it was then December — he must pack off.

Then it was that Don Bosco's ingenuity invented the flying Oratory, not a very commendable kind of guild, it makes too heavy demands upon one's health and patience and devotion, and especially involves the complicity of the sun, which is not always to be relied on. They gathered together on Sunday morning in the Church Square, and then in silence, so as not to disturb the neighbours, they set off. No sooner had they left the town than tongues began to wag, and, some praying and others singing, they came to a neighbouring church, Our Lady of the Fields, the Capuchin Church or the Superga Basilica. There Don Bosco confessed his young friends, said Mass and gave the boys Holy Communion, and afterwards returned to Turin. In the evening they start-

ed off in another direction, but this time it was for a walk or a game or to shout and make merry. They went back along with the stars, and the most devout accompanied their Father to one of the last services of Benediction.

This Bohemian sort of life lasted only for a time. The winter was upon them and soon put an end to it. Don Bosco saw that he could not carry on his out-of-door club any longer, and he hired three rooms in a house near the little hospital of the Marchesa di Barolo. These three rooms were opened during the week for evening classes for the more backward of the bigger lads; and on Sundays there were questions in Catechism for all. How on earth did they contrive to find room for all this restless crowd of youths? It is an historical point we cannot clear up. The religious offices were attended in a parish close by; games were played in some neighbouring fields lined with mulberry-trees under the paternal eyes of Don Bosco. It was far from ideal but still they carried on.

Unfortunately, a fresh storm broke upon this constantly persecuted enterprise. The tenants of the house informed the owner that the noise of these boys, and especially their going to their classes and returning in the evening, disturbed their peace: and this was certainly true. Of one accord they offered him this dilemma: he must choose between them and Don Bosco; either the latter must go, or they would. The owner did not hesitate a moment, and he gave notice to Don Bosco, who, for the sake of peace, not knowing where to turn with his four hundred boys, at the end of March, hired an adjoining field, amidst which arose a wretched shanty made of cob. It meant living out in the open with a vengeance. From one trial after another, they had come to having no roof over their heads to shelter them from the rain or the snow or the wind.

But another trouble was soon to befall him. Hitherto his undertaking had only been threatened in its material circumstances, but soon it was to incur suspicion from authority. The storm broke upon it from both sides at once.

First of all, it was the clergy of Turin who were displeased at seeing so many young folks gathering under the guidance of Don Bosco. " They all belong to different parishes," said they; " let them attend their own instead of deserting them to go to services held here and there, and

always conducted by Don Bosco. Soon they will know nothing of their own rectors or parishes, and this is bad for them."

To this Father Borel replied: " But these boys until now have never been to church. They would be sorely puzzled if you were to ask them what parish they belonged to. If they don't go to Don Bosco they will go nowhere. Leave them to their teacher and he will make capital parishioners of them in time. Besides, most of them are strangers to the town. Note, too, that they are from fifteen to eighteen years old: for the sake of Christian doctrine, are you going to put them in your catechism classes along with the children of ten or twelve? And mark this, too, that if Don Bosco gets them to come to him, it is because he uses certain means — games, walks, prizes, evening classes — which demand both special training and perseverance. Do you think you are courageous enough to follow his example? " This was common sense but it did not convince everybody, and many prejudices persisted.

In that quarter, at any rate, tribute was paid to his zeal, but elsewhere his good intentions met with detractors. There were staid citizens who imagined, when they saw him surrounded with a crowd of youths swayed by a sign or a look, that he was upholdinging a gang of idlers and rebels, insubordinate fellows who were ready to lend a hand to any violent popular rising that might occur. Don Bosco was summoned to the town hall and soundly rated by the Marchese di Cavour, the Major of Turin, the father of the great statesman, and finally told to abandon his work. " I will do so if my Archbishop orders me to do it," said Don Bosco with spirit. " I will see that you get your orders all right," said the angry Marquis, astonished at his resistance.

In fact, he did his best in that direction but in vain. Then the plain clothes police kept an eye upon Don Bosco, and every Sunday, on the opening of his club in the open air, you could see the police agents prowling along by the hedges in plain clothes and watching the comings and goings of the embryo revolutionaries. Being quickly recognised, as they always are, they aroused both the curiosity and the chaff of the youngsters. As for Don Bosco, he took to turning the tables upon them very neatly, when at the hour for the address, he stood upon a hillock to talk to his children. For the worthy agents drew nearer and nearer, and listened more and more intently so as not to miss a word of the discourse: and they were indeed in good luck, for it was often addressed

to themselves, and the allusions to their own spiritual needs were perfectly clear. " If they send us here three more Sundays," said one of them, " we shall end up by all going to confession. A queer sort of conspirator, this priest! "

It was not he who was conspiring but the powers of evil opposed to his work. No doubt they had a presentiment that a formidable organisation for the salvation of the young was about to issue from the endeavours of this humble priest, and were doing all they could to ruin it from the start. The means they employed to thwart his enterprise were discouragement, which even his best friends tried to instil into his mind, and the awkward rumours that were spread about as to his mental condition. " Why do you persist? You see clearly that circumstances are against you. Confine your activities to a single set of children, the best or the most exposed to risks. For twenty boys you can easily find a place. As for the rest, they must wait for God's own time." And others muttered when they heard him describing all his apostolic schemes: " Poor Don Bosco! He has a fixed idea. He sees everything on a grand scale. It's a clear case of megalomania. Unluckily, his brain may get worse with it, and then . . ."

" No, no indeed, I don't see things on a grand scale," replied Don Bosco to his incredulous friends, " I see things as they will be. Yes, we shall soon have churches, playgrounds, and houses; priests, clerics, and laymen to help us in bringing up the boys; we shall have thousands of children, we shall have . . ."

" Well, as a matter of fact, you have nothing," remarked Father Borel, his best friend.

" That may be; but soon I shall be at the head of a large Oratory."

" Oratory! "

" Yes, it is as I tell you. I can see it with my own eyes, detail by detail: church, playground and field; there is nothing lacking."

" Where is all that? "

" I can't tell you now; but it exists, and we shall have it."

" Poor Don Bosco," murmured Father Borel, and his tone indicated the deep pity he felt for such mental troubles. " My poor Don Bosco! "

Meanwhile, the rumour spread amongst the clergy that Don Bosco was no longer up to the mark, and that he was plainly running off the rails. Might it not be well to get him a few weeks' rest in some quiet

retreat? This was so seriously considered in high quarters that one day two venerable canons called upon him, and, after the usual civilities, turned the conversation towards his apostolic projects.

" Well, then, Don Bosco, you are still thinking of your Oratory? "

" Still thinking of it? Why, more than ever; and I shall soon have a large building with playgrounds, evening classes, workshops, a church to hold five hundred lads, and plenty of priests, catechists, masters, foremen to help me in my work."

" A regular army, eh? "

" That's the very word for it."

" Then you are thinking of founding a religious Order? "

" Now you've got it."

" And what sort of habit will you give your religious? "

" I will clothe them with virtue," replied the imperturbable Don Bosco.

" Virtue; with virtue; quite so! But you will want a little more than that."

" Well, I shall make them work and go about in their shirt-sleeves, just like the masons."

Don Bosco's visitors replied with a wry but significant smile; " Now there is no doubt of it."

" Have I said something silly? " he asked with a candidly astonished look. " I only wished to impress you with this truth: a religious Order without poverty cannot go very far. So you see: poverty and shirt-sleeves; one explains the other."

" Yes, yes indeed. We quite understand, dear Don Bosco," said the two Canons as they withdrew.

And in the corridor: " Quite an obsession; he has every mark of it. We must take steps at once."

What steps were taken we know. A few days afterwards Don Bosco was visited in his little room at the Refuge by two ecclesiastics from Turin. One was the rector of St. Augustine's, Canon Ponzetti; the name of the other is not on record. After speaking of the rain and the fine weather, the two visitors led up to the subject which they had at heart, and Don Bosco repeated what he had said to so many others. The two priests looked at one another in consternation, as much as to say: " So

we were not misled. It is indeed true. He is unhinged. There is no time to lose."

The carriage in which they had come was at the door.

" Don Bosco," said the rector of St. Augustine's, " what would you say to taking a little drive; we have a comfortable conveyance down below."

" Why my dear Fathers, I shall be delighted, simply delighted! Just wait for me to get my hat, and I will be with you."

Two minutes later, the three priests went downstairs, and at the door of the open carriage the two accomplices invited Don Bosco to get in.

" Pray excuse me, gentlemen, *seniores priores*."

The two Canons had to submit and go in first. The second of them had scarcely passed the door when Don Bosco closed it and said sharply to the driver:

" Quick now, to the asylum."

With a crack of his whip the man drove away at a rapid gallop. The asylum was close by, and its staff was all in readiness. The folding doors were both wide open and the carriage whirled into the courtyard. The attendants flung themselves forwards to receive the patient whom they had been ordered to treat with respect but also with energy. Instead of one patient they found two, struggling and shouting and gesticulating. " Hang it! " thought the men. " Here they are, in the midst of an attack. No joke, this! Still, we must try to restrain them with as little roughness as possible." But the two friends shouted all the louder, calling for the manager, the chaplain, and for the doctor on duty. The chaplain was the first to arrive, and then the mystery was cleared up. There is no need to tell on which side the laugh was now. Henceforward no one had anything to say about the incurable mental affliction of Don Bosco.

But nevertheless his troubles were far from over. Thus it was that they managed to deprive him of his restricted use of the poor field in which he and his children had sought refuge; and this is how the affair happened.

Our readers have already guessed how these few acres of land were employed. In the morning, Don Bosco greeted his young people, and sitting on a hump of ground confessed those who desired absolution; then they were off to a neighbouring church to go to Mass, which was always followed by a free collation. In the afternoon, the four hundred

boys always met regularly in the field and had their fling to their heart's content. Then, at the sound of an old bugle, they stopped their games and divided into four classes, according to their age and schooling, they had a lesson in catechism, after which Don Bosco from the top of a hillock gave out the notices for the week, a short address and, to finish the religious service, intoned the litany of the Blessed Virgin. From then until nightfall there were great games of prisoners' base and rounders and fights for the flag.

It was too good to last. One day, the Filippi brothers, the owners of the field, came to Don Bosco and said: " Your boys' games trample down the grass so heavily that they destroy it to the very roots. Soon our field will on longer be a field, but a mere road. We therefore give you notice: we will even let you off the last quarter's rent, provided that you give it up in a fortnight."

A fortnight to quit! Don Bosco could hardly trust his ears. But at last he took courage, hoping that within a fortnight Providence would intervene. A week went by: nothing happened. Then a fortnight was gone: and still there was nothing. And now they had reached the Sunday when Don Bosco would have to leave his children. What a bitter thought! Just to see them coming that day made his heart bleed. But his faith held good.

" Let us go to Our Lady of the Fields," said he after the last confession had been heard; " I have a great favour to ask of the Blessed Virgin. You will ask for it with me." And they went off to the old church and prayed fervently to the Madonna, for they knew their Father's soul was troubled.

About two o'clock the four hundred lads were there again, unaware of the danger that threatened them. At the regular hour they had catechism, hymn and sermon as usual, then the games began afresh as wildly as ever. Don Bosco, however, crushed with grief, was walking by himself along the side of the field. " As I looked at the crowd of children," he wrote afterwards, " and thought of the rich harvest they promised to my priesthood, I felt my heart was breaking. I was alone, without helpers, my health shattered, and I could not tell where to gather my poor little lads together henceforward. O my God, I prayed as I cast my looks heavenwards, show me where I must gather them on Sunday, or tell me what I ought to do." A prayer in which faith, confidence and love were

united in indefinable proportions: but it was about to be answered.

In fact, Don Bosco had scarcely finished his agonised appeal to heaven, when an old fellow came into the field.

" I hear you are looking for a site," said he. " I have a mate named Pinardi who has a capital shed to let. Will you come and see it? "

Don Bosco followed him. This capital shed was a sort of hayloft with a low roof with plenty of holes in it.

" Well, really it is too low," said Don Bosco, feeling he had been rather let down.

" Never mind that. We will dig out a couple of feet of earth and put down a floor. Then you will have the use of the land round the shed, all the lot for twelve pounds a year. What do you think of it? "

" On lease? " asked Don Bosco, thinking of all his recent disappointments.

" On lease, and everything ready by Sunday."

Don Bosco returned to the field, and the setting sun lit up a truly touching sight. All the little urchins, on hearing that henceforwards and for ever after they now had an assured refuge, could not contain their joy. They danced and sang and cheered their great friend, who at once said a rosary with them in thanksgiving, and God knows with what fervour.

Henceforward the Salesian Oratory was established. After eighteen months of sorrowful wandering it took possession of the Pinardi holding, around which year by year a great Society, springing from the tears and poverty of a humble priest, was to develop and some day to spread all over the world.

If the Oratory itself had henceforth an assured home, it was not the same with Don Bosco. We know how the Marchesa di Barolo had appointed him as assistant chaplain to the Institute of St. Philomena. In addition to its slender salary — some twenty-four pounds a year — it provided him with board and lodging. That meant two anxieties the less in a life as harassed as his was, for he carried on his two works abreast: the chaplaincy of the Refuge and the management of his boys. Neither of them was a sinecure. Hence the Marchesa quickly took umbrage at her chaplain's additional apostolate. Nobody could belong to her and to someone else at the same time. At least, she thought so, and she would never tolerate it.

One day she came into Don Bosco's room, looking unusually determined.

" Dear Father," said she, " I am delighted with the spiritual work you are doing for my young girls of the Refuge; it is really splendid."

" Indeed, my Lady, there is no need to thank me for that; I am only doing the work you have so kindly entrusted to me."

" Quite so, dear Don Bosco, but I don't exactly see how you can long continue adding on to that work by undertaking the charge of hundreds of boys who will overtax your strength."

" Don't worry, my Lady. God has helped me so far. He will go on doing it."

" No. You will just kill yourself, my dear Father, and I don't want that; or else my work will have to suffer. That is why I have come to give you a piece of advice."

" What is it? "

" Either to give up your work or mine. Think it over. You can give your answer in a few days."

" But I have thought it over, Madame. Thanks to your wealth and your rank, you can find not only one but a dozen priests to fill my office. Yet my poor children, if I don't take care of them, will find no one to look after them. You can see what follows."

" And where will you find a home? And what will you live on? "

" God will provide."

" But your health is broken down; your brain, I am told, is tired out: so be reasonable. Take the rest you need, one, two or three years, if required. I will take all the expense upon myself. And then, when you are quite set up, you can go on with your work at the Refuge."

" It can't be done, Madame. I tell you once more: my life is entirely given up to my poor little lads, and nothing and no one will drive me from the path which our Lord has marked out for me."

" So you prefer your young vagabonds to my little orphan girls! In that case, consider yourself as discharged from your office. I will look for a successor."

" But your Ladyship will hardly turn me out in that way; that would make people talk, and it would damage my priestly reputation," replied Don Bosco with the utmost dignity.

" Very well; I will give you three months to resign your post and to give up your quarters."

And in this dilemma the imperious Marchesa left him. First the sons, and now the Father were turned out of doors.

Poor Don Bosco! This upset and this anxiety as to finding a place might well have been spared him, for he had no strength left. The Marchesa was not mistaken in thinking that a glance at his tired features showed that he was on the verge of a breakdown. No one could live with impunity such a life as his had been for the last twenty months. His successive removals, five in ten months, his hunt in the town for work for his sons, his interminable hours in the confessional, his little world of boys who had not only to be entertained and taught, but also often had to be fed and clothed, the numerous visits he had to make to collect alms, the sick boys he had to comfort and cheer, and all the rest, such as the religious services at the Refuge, the rounds in the prisons, and the catechism classes at the Cottolengo Hospital, had imperceptibly undermined his constitution. A mere nothing, the slightest carelessness, the smallest of bacilli, was enough to produce a catastrophe. And one came at beginning of July, 1846, in the form of a violent attack of pneumonia.

It was one Sunday evening after an exhausting day at the Oratory that poor Don Bosco, on returning to his room, fainted with exhaustion. He had to be carried to bed, and then the fever never left him. Within a week he was at the very edge of the grave.

Next Sunday, Father Borel, accompanied by the bigger boys of the Oratory weeping bitter tears, brought him the Viaticum. His mother and elder brother were there, having run to his deathbed. Two days later, Extreme Unction was administered to him.

This sad news spread amongst his little world of lads from the beginning of the week and threw it into consternation. Every boy felt that he was about to lose his father. There were moving scenes of gratitude. While the older ones got permission to act as infimarians and succeeded one another night and day at his bedside, others took up their post at the door at the foot of the staircase, trying to slip through if only for a minute, into the room of their great friend.

" Only let me see him, I won't speak to him," said one. " I only want to say a single word to him, but I don't want him to die before I

have said it," said another. " If Don Bosco knew I was here, he would ask me in," asserted a third. " Just set the door ajar for a glance at him," begged others.

But the doctor's orders were peremptory. And there they all stayed on the watch for the least news, with heavy hearts. Could God possibly leave them to themselves once more, without any guide or friend or protector? No. And if a miracle were required, why, they would obtain it.

Then the boys tried to storm the divine compassion with the most tremendous assault that has ever been recorded in the annals of any Institution. In the church of the Consolata, all these boys and youths — most of them only yesterday mere children from the gutter — took turns hour after hour in trying to wrest his cure from Mary's hands. Their prayers began early in the morning and ended only late at night; others went on praying at home; others persevered till dawn. These youths in their frenzy made vows to snatch their Father from the clutches of death: they would say the rosary for a month, for a year, all their life. Many fasted on bread and water, some of them for several days together, and these were youngsters who were all day long running up and down with hods of mortar on their shoulders as far as the fifth floor of a building, and as often as fifty times a day. How had that humble priest won the hearts of these lads! And now he lay at death's door, calmly preparing to appear in the presence of God.

Nevertheless, in the race between death, which was already climbing upstairs, and prayers, which from Mary's feet were ascending in faith and confidence to the gate of heaven, it was the prayers that won. The very night which, according to the doctors, would prove fatal, was the turning point towards Don Bosco's recovery of life.

" Don Bosco," said Father Borel at a given moment, " you know that word in the Holy Book which says: In thy sickness pray to the Lord and He shall heal thee."

" Let God's will be done, dear friend."

" Just murmur: Lord, if it be thy good pleasure, cure me. I beg you to say this in the name of all your children. Come, repeat the words after me."

The dying man said them.

" Now I am sure you will be cured," joyfully cried good Father Borel in rising. " All we wanted was your own prayer."

In fact, next day the doctors declared that the crisis was over and that, if there were no complications, the evil would be surmounted.

A fortnight later, one mild Sunday evening, those who were walking in the suburb saw no common sight. A swarm of youths were looking for someone to appear at the door of the Refuge. Suddenly, there they saw the outline of Don Bosco. Then there followed a delirious outburst. An armchair was in readiness, and he had to take his seat in it. At once the stout shoulders of the bigger boys hoisted him above the crowd of younger ones, who sang and shouted and wept and formed a royal train to carry him off to their poor shed of a chapel. " My little ones, my dear little fellows," said Don Bosco when they had reached the altar, " thank you, thank you for this proof of your love! Thank you for all your prayers which have brought me back to life. If I am here, I owe it to you. So it is only right for me to use all the rest of the days God may give me in your service. Count upon me; but you, too, must help me to save your souls." All the youngsters were in tears, Father Borel was sobbing, and Don Bosco could not control his feelings. A few days later, he left for Becchi, now convalescent. Nothing but his native soil could fully restore him after so rude a shock.

During his absence, the Oratory went on as best as it could in the hands of Don Bosco's friends, who gathered round Father Borel and did all in their power to carry out what was demanded by the difficult business. Then they found out what a store of patience and devotion was indispensable; for living in close contact with these obstreperous, noisy, clamorous youths, who were affectionate indeed, but sometimes so foul-mouthed and coarse, so dirty and ragged and even covered with vermin; for looking kindly upon all, upon those who were cross-grained as well as upon those who were smiling; for running all over the town day after day in search of jobs for the unemployed; for begging to right and left for alms from those whose interest it was to see this host of potential revolutionaries transformed; for adding to their own fatiguing labours as good priests this extra and exhausting Sunday work; for being at the beck of everyone everywhere and always; and for earning by way of remuneration the unjust criticisms of people of goodwill. But these excellent friends gave themselves up to the work during three months, and saved it from ruin while Don Bosco's convalescence proceeded at a good rate. At the end of October, despite the warnings of

the doctors and of his friends, he could hold out no longer: his body had not quite recovered, but his soul was too distressed at being so far from his poor dependents. He decided to go back to them at All Saints' Day.

The question of finding accomodation had been settled. He had taken four rooms on the first floor of the Pinardi House: and this enabled him to be in the midst of his Oratory. But this house and the two adjoining ones, one of which was an inn called The Giardiniera, were not exactly isles of the blessed. Even on weekdays shameless scandals occurred. No priest could live there alone without arousing suspicion. Hence someone reliable and of irreproachable character had to be found to share the priest's poor dwelling. " Why not take your mother? " suggested the Dean of Castelnuovo, the good and always kind Don Cinzano.

He had indeed thought of asking his mother but had never dared to make the proposal. His mother was no longer young, and she well deserved a little quiet and repose in the peaceful solitude of Becchi. And what could he offer her in exchange for the daily petty cares of her poor home? The noise and disturbance and insatiable demands and the bad manners of four hundred lively young lads. It meant giving up all the memories of her youth, all the steady uniformity of her own way of life, the tranquility of the fields, the sweetness of her friendships, for the uprooted and hustled and feverish life of the city. And then, if she accepted all he proposed, she would come under his orders and obey him and have to subordinate her life to his. No: that would never do. But how could he manage otherwise? Then he took his courage in both hands and informed her of his desire.

" If you think it is God's will," she said unhesitatingly, " you can rely upon me."

So they set out on the morrow of All Souls' Day, November 3, 1846. Some days earlier, knowing well the poverty she would find at Valdocco, she had made up her mind to a painful sacrifice. Right at the bottom of her wardrobe, embalmed in lavender, lay her bridal dress. There it had lain for thirty years, carrying back her mind from time to time to her earliest memories of faithful love, to the thought of her dear deceased husband. From the dark corner she took out the fine material which had hidden the strongest beatings of her heart, and ran to sell it — not

at all dearly — to make a little money towards the first expenses they had to face. The poor old countrywoman could not read but hers was a noble heart.

And one November morning, she, carrying all her little possessions in a basket, a little linen, her housekeeping tackle, and he, with his missal under his arm, a few note-books and his breviary, went down on foot to Turin. It was a six hours' walk, over twenty miles. It was far too much for one just convalescent and for an old woman. And they were very exhausted at the end of it. At the crossways of the Rondó, where the Corso Regina Margherita cuts the Corso Valdocco, they met a friend, Don Vola, who saw they looked tired and dusty and asked them:

" Where do you come from? You look quite done up and very dusty."

" From Becchi."

" On foot? "

" Yes," and an expressive gesture indicated lack of cash.

" And where are you going to put up? "

" At the Pinardi's with my mother."

" How are you going to live now? "

" Well, dear Father, that is a question I should be rather puzzled to answer; but we shall trust in God, and He will look after us."

" Poor Don Bosco, let me help you. Wait a bit."

And the good priest began to search his pockets.

" Not a farthing tonight. I have changed my cassock. Well, here is my watch."

" But what about you? "

" Oh! I've another. Sell this bauble and buy something to live on."

And then their generous friend left them.

Don Bosco turned to his mother and said: " You see how Providence is looking after us. Have confidence."

A couple of hundred yards, and then they were home. On the first floor of Pinardi House their humble dwelling awaited them. Two of the four rooms were furnished, if you can call furniture a wretched bed, a deal table, a straw-bottomed chair, which were the bare necessaries for work and rest and existence.

It was long after nightfall. By the dim light of a candle, while his

mother began preparing a morsel, Don Bosco hung up at the head of the beds a holy water stoup, a spring of box and a picture.

Under the balcony, waiting as they had often been doing ever since they expected his return, was a group of lads asking themselves, as they looked at the dimly-lighted windowpanes, whether he was all right. They dared not go up, as they were not sure. But suddenly, in the silence of the quiet night, arose a lovely tenor voice accompanied by another and a weaker one, that of woman. Both were singing a hymn formerly composed by the good Silvio Pellico in honour of his Guardian Angel:

Dweller in the Angels' city,
What dost thou at my side?

And the boys outside took up the strain.

The establishment of a great work

Just one look round, and the apostle courageously resumed the work which he had left off a few months before. Without too great a loss his Oratory had passed through the storm: and this was an important matter. It had now to be settled more and more firmly, since it had a roof over it, at least a roof over the chapel, and its chief had taken up his quarters on the ground. One of Don Bosco's first cares was to give the evening classes, started a year ago, a greater development. Among the boys who frequented the Oratory many could not even read — and these were often the bigger ones: a great drawback, if they were to be taught religion, a sad social handicap if dishonest masters tried to exploit them. Therefore Don Bosco started a reading class, and the primer he gave his pupils was the little diocesan catechism, thus killing two birds with one stone. To this embryonic evening class were added later on classes in arithmetic, in the mother tongue, in drawing, geography, grammar and singing. The boys gathered, or rather were packed together, into two rooms adjoining those of Don Bosco and his mother. Afterwards, as the tenants gradually departed, all that remained free was taken by the chief and immediately transformed into school quarters. The Oratory came progressively into possession of Pinardi House and steadily dislodged the irregular households that it sheltered. It was astounding to see all these big youths, who had till then put up with their lamentable ignorance so stoutly, now competing with one another so strenuously in acquiring an honest stock of various knowledge.

To help him in his work, which was beyond the power of any one man, Don Bosco had recourse to the most intelligent of his older boys.

He took them aside during the week in their free time and trained them to be teachers and masters of their comrades. He taught them Italian, Latin, French and mathematics to qualify them for some liberal profession but on condition that they were to give instruction to their ignorant or backward associates. This was the first attempt at a method of training which was to be such a success later on. By slow but sure ascents it brought to the top those who would become leaders of the Oratory,from the framework out of the ranks, and draw from the junior membership heads more capable than anyone else of teaching and ruling them. On trial, the young masters thus trained proved such teachers that a few months later, in the Spring of 1847, an academical Commission, attracted by the reports spread in Turin of the crowded attendance of these evening classes, could not hide its admiration of the results obtained. It went through the poor premises, questioned the lads at haphazard as to what they were taught, and the answers of these illiterates of yesterday were so clear and definite that it asked for a subsidy for the educational work of the director, and an annual grant of three hundred francs was voted unhesitatingly.

What was the number of the recipients of Don Bosco's charitable efforts in that year 1847? Was it six or seven hundred? It is hard to determine. One thing alone is certain: they were stifling in far too close quarters. There were only two possible solutions of this problem: to extend or to swarm. To extend was impossible, for the last tenants at Pinardi House would not budge: Don Bosco therefore had to swarm. He was almost glad to come to this decision, so that other quarters of the town might profit by getting such a beneficial Institution, and to gather together nearer to their own wretched home a vast quantity of children who came to him every Sunday from the other end of Turin. So in 1847 he opened the Oratory of St. Aloysius close to the main station, and two years later, that of the Guardian Angel in another part of the town. One evening, after prayers, he announced his plan to the boys gathered round him in these graphic words:

" When a hive overflows it swarms and its surplus goes to fill another hive. And so it is with us. In playtime we are all upon one another; at chapel we are packed like herrings in a barrel. There is no room to move. Let us copy the bees and go and start another Oratory."

And this is what they did. Thus three centres of Christian life were

lighted at three points of the great city; at their flame hunderds of boys could now come to enlighten their minds and to warm their hearts.

During these years — 1847-1850 — Italy was passing through a political crisis unique in its history. In the interior, there was the conquest of their popular liberties one after another by the States of the Peninsula. At Naples, King Ferdinand II, on January 29, 1848, promulgated a Constitution which was to govern his kingdom until its fall and his own exile. At Rome, Pius IX, by the mouth of his Secretary of State, Cardinal Antonelli, on March 14, granted all the Papal States a Charter of freedom which was inspired, like that of Naples, by the French Charter of 1830. In Tuscany, the Grand Duke Leopold, from May, 1847, had given a certain amount of liberty to the press, which surely led on to wider concessions. Lastly, at Turin, on March 4, 1848, Charles Albert, yielding to the powerful pressure of public opinion stirred up by the press, proclaimed the Constitution which, when the unity of Italy had been realised under the authority of the House of Savoy, would soon rule the whole of the Peninsula in its relations between the citizens and the central power.

A second political impulse, no less incendiary than the first, was slowly forming in the minds of certain statemen, under the shadow of many of the Lodges, in the works of notorious writers, and also in the heart of more than one patriot as well as in the hearts of the people: Italy was yearning for her unity. From the seven separate States of which she was then composed she dreamed of becoming one great kingdom, which would belong to whoever could manage by diplomacy or war to reunite into one the scattered fragments of the nation. Of these States several belonged directly or indirectly to the House of Austria, which thus ruled over a good third of the country. Therefore, to realise her unity in full, the Austrian had to be turned out. Forgetting all their agelong rivalries as republics, Grand Duchies or kingdoms, the Italians had to rise freely to a common consciousness to secure their national enfranchisement; after which nothing would stay the country in the path of progress. This latent triple force which worked in the Peninsula for more than forty years, and ranked in its service the sword of the condottiere, the pamphlet of the polemist, the astuteness of the diplomat and the intelligence of the philosopher, has found a name in contemporary history: the *Risorgimento,* a formidable movement which kept

one of the most ardent of the Latin nations in a fever for nearly half a century.

This fever naturally permeated all classes of society from stratum to stratum, and upset the heads of the best of youths. At this time, some of the seminarists definitely disobeyed the Archbishop of Turin and went out into the town to mingle with the people who were acclaiming the proclamation of the Charter. The same unruly spirits, intoxicated with the heady liquor served out so freely by newspapers and pamphlets, did not shrink, at the pontifical Mass on Christmas night, to display cockades on their surplices in the midst of the cathedral choir. In 1849, a Turin Oratory, which Don Bosco had to take in hand again, that of the Guardian Angel, went of to the war, joining the army as volunteers. From the habit of playing at soldiers in the playground of the Oratory, they came to want to play the real game on the battlefield; but they soon found it was something very different from the playing field.

The Valdocco Oratory itself did not succeed in always keeping clear of these warlike gusts. One Sunday evening, one of the priests who gave voluntary assistance in these trying times delivered a sermon so unevangelical, so full of ill digested ideas on emancipation, independence and liberty, that Don Bosco was much upset by it. After Benediction was over, he was about to address some calm but just reproaches to the imprudent speaker, when he saw the latter hoist the national flag and pin a cockade in his hat, and, followed by a troop of young catechists whom he had won over to his views, go forth noisily into the playground with a few hundred boys in his wake. The troop went away never to return, and this wandering company, which was purely a political one, led a very precarious existence; three or four months proved enough to disband it.

These few facts, chosen out of many, show in what a superheated atmosphere they were living. Nothing but the war was thought of or spoken of, nothing but war songs were hummed, only war games were played and at night all their dreams too were of war. On coming out of school as on leaving the workshop groups were formed on bits of waste land or in the public squares, and they exercised themselves in handling arms. Grand manoeuvres or guerilla warfare, these were the fashionable amusements. Nor were they always harmless, for often there

were broken heads and blood was shed. There is no need to say that this warlike frenzy made the church services and sermons and catechising appear uncommonly dull: the boys deserted the house of God.

How were they to be kept in hand nevertheless? Don Bosco long reflected over this problem. Finally he resolved with his practical mind to rivert this ill directed youthful enthusiasm into the service of God. In those days, the days of the first war of Italian independence, he had won the friendship of one of the *bersaglieri,* who had just finished the rough campaign of 1848. This brave non-commissioned officer had placed himself at Don Bosco's disposal for every sort of service of a military character. The apostle eagerly welcomed the offer, and immediately begged his friend to train his boys in guerilla warfare. Thus they would be kept in hand by the popular craze, and the business was settled there and then. The expert selected an élite from the sharpest and best trained youths, and began their military education. The government agreed to lend them two hundred harmless wooden guns and as many sticks to complete their equipment, and the *bersagliere* made a present of his bugle to the young recruits.

In a few weeks they were so well trained that they could take part in sham fights, and so could the curious lookers-on who had been attracted by the sight of these budding warriors.

But one day things took an unfortunate turn.

Near the playground where the boys were manoeuvring, mother Margaret, by dint of care and hard work, had made a little kitchen garden, in which she cultivated vegetables for seasoning the soup and furnishing the table. It even contained an oblong patch of herbs for feeding the rabbits.

Now, one Sunday evening, the *bersagliere* sounded the bugle and gathered his troops together for a grand assault. They were divided into two parties: the winners and the losers. The various feints, manoeuvres, and the final attack, all was planned splendidly. To give spirit to the troops, there was not only the boys' love of a fray, but also, unluckily, a " gallery " of spectators. And this was the cause of the misfortune with its shouts and stampings, with its excitement and stimulating applause. For how many follies committed by poor human vanity is the " gallery " responsible?

At first all was for the best. The programme was carried through

step after step. Each side played its part conscientiously and earnestly and with coolness. The moves were made according to plan and the little world of youthful soldiers did their evolutions with all the gravity of veterans. The eye of the *bersagliere* dominated the battlefield and kept his men under control. Even the spectators were fascinated by the game and joined in it with their enthusiastic instigation.

But at the last charge everything went wrong. The bugle on one side rang out madly and wildly, bravos roared forth on the other, the fury of the party which felt all eyes were on it, all these led up to a climax of disaster. The conquered army was driven on to the hedge and then through it. Crushing down this feeble obstacle, with the conquering party at its heels, in a twinkling it had trampled down and devastated mother Margaret's wonderful beds. All the results of her many months of labour were annihilated in a few seconds by this army intoxicated with glory which excited even the umpires to join in the slaughter. It was indeed lamentable.

And this all the more so, because just then the poor woman appeared on the threshold of her kitchen and, turning to her son who was looking on at the massacre quite helplessly, she said:

" See, John, see what your *bersagliere* has done. I have no kitchen garden left."

And Don Bosco replied:

" Poor mother, what can I do? Boys will be boys."

And he asked the *bersagliere* to distribute sweets to both the victors and the vanquished.

Not long before he had given a still finer example of his wonderful understanding of the young and one that proved even more costly to mother Margaret. One spring evening, at a neighbouring crossway, as he was going home he encountered a gang of ruffians who would have made short work of him, had he not taken them to an inn close by and treated them to one, or even two drinks. Having thus cajoled them, he gave them a bit of a sermon.

" Since we are now good friends," said he, " won't you give me the pleasure of not hearing you swear so blasphemously as you did just now when you saw me coming? It sounds ugly; and it also provokes heaven's punishments."

" Yes, indeed, Don Bosco, and gladly too. Only, as you know well,

it is not our fault. It just slips out . . . it's just habit . . . but in future, well, you shall see."

" Very well. Now go home sensibly; and on Sunday I will expect you down yonder at Pinardi House where I live."

" To go home is a difficult job for us," said some of them.

" Where do you sleep, then? "

" Just wherever we can. At the doss-house for tuppence; at a friend's; in a stable or anywhere; never in the same place two nights running."

" In that case, come back with me," said Don Bosco.

Surrounded with this at first far from encouraging company he went down to Valdocco, where his mother was anxiously awaiting his return. Under the roof of the house there was a loft in which there were some remains of straw. Don Bosco led his rascals there, having first provided them with a sheet and blanket, and, after having made them recite a scrap of prayer for better or worse, he wished them good night. Next morning, glad of his encounter of the previous night, he climbed up to the loft once more to awake his friends and to say a few hearty words to them and send them off to work. Unluckily, they had all decamped before dawn taking their sheets and blankets with them in order to sell them. This step was a failure.

The second was more successful. Not long afterwards an orphan turned up at the door. It was a mason's apprentice who had come to Turin in search of work. He had spent all the few pence in his pocket without finding anything to do.

Night fell and it was raining in torrents. He was wet to the bone and his stomach was now in his heels. Mother Margaret quickly lit a big fire, and dried the guest whom God had sent to their hearth. She served him with supper, and then set down a mattress in the middle of the kitchen. Sheets and blankets completed his princely bed, and the poor boy slept that night as happy as a king. But while she was tucking in the blankets, she whispered into the young fellow's ear words of motherly love and suggested a few good thoughts for him to dwell upon before he fell asleep.

This is the origin of the custom which has always been continued in Salesian Houses, of ending the day, after evening prayers, with a short address to the boys. These little motherly words are still, as in

those days, one of the most powerful means used in Salesian education.

Don Bosco's guest therefore became the first boarder at the Oratory; soon came a second and then a third, until there were ten. Then they had time to take breath, and also more rooms in Pinardi House. The opportunity came soon, and Don Bosco, now turned into a hirer of rooms, was able to find shelter for a few more unfortunates under his roof. If his views became still wider he would have to buy the house. This took place in 1851 in the most unexpected way.

Pinardi had always said that he would never sell his house under three thousand pounds or more, a most unreasonable price. One day he spoke to Don Bosco half jestingly:

" Well, Don Bosco, won't you buy my thouse, then? "

" Don Bosco will buy it whenever Signor Pinardi is ready to take a reasonable price for it."

" I have asked three thousand pounds."

" Well, it is no use to speak of it."

" But what will you offer? "

" The building is valued at about a thousand pounds or guineas. I offer you twelve hundred pounds."

" Are you ready to give twenty pounds' worth of ornaments to my wife as a bonus? "

" I will do that."

" And pay ready money? "

" Yes."

" In a fortnight, and cash down? "

" If you like."

" A forfeit of four thousand pounds for whoever breaks the contract."

" Agreed."

They shake hands and the bargain is settled. It had only taken five minutes.

Of course, Don Bosco had not a crown towards the amount; but his boys were in question, and his confidence was absolute. His mother's was not so strong.

" But where are you going to find the money? " she asked. " We have nothing but debts."

" Come, mother, if you had money, would you not give me some? "

" Of course."

" Well and good. Why should you think that the Lord, who is rich, will be less generous? "

As a matter of fact, the house was paid for in less than a week. One evening, Don Cafasso brought four hundred pounds, the generous gift of the Countess Riccardi; next day, a Rosminian Father came to the Oratory to consult Don Bosco about the investment of a sum of eight hundred pounds which had been entrusted to him. He could not have come at a better moment: at once the investment was mentioned to him and acceped. The banker Cotta provided the costs, and on February 19, 1851, Pinardi House was paid for.

It was soon filled with a colony of apprentices, like so many other houses scattered among the fields in the outskirts of Turin, just beyond the octroi. All the thirty artisans it could hold filled it: thirty boys to be sheltered and fed and lodged amongst the employers of the town. Don Bosco found them work without very much difficulty, and every morning after early Mass, with a roll in their pocket or in their mouth, they were off to their workyard or factory. Midday saw them back with ferocious appetite; and to appease it Don Bosco supplied them with an amazingly thick soup or a polenta as brown as it was stiff, often made by his own hands; and for drink they had a neighbouring spring of fresh clear water; and, in addition, each one was given a few halfpence to buy a second course with. In those days, what could not be bought for a few halfpence! The refectory was the most romantic in the world; some sat on the steps of the staircase; others on an old stray log; some by the spring and others on the kitchen threshold. When the meal was over, they went to the tap to clean their plates; and they kept their dinner-things in their pockets for the next meal. Through all the little groups Don Bosco passed with a happy smile, girt with an apron, offering a steaming ladleful to whoever wanted more. It was family life in the fullest meaning of the word, a thorough communion of hearts. This ideal of the simple life, with its freedom from care, its pure joys and reciprocal cordiality, Don Bosco never gave up, and all his skill as an educator consisted in preserving in everyone of his houses, as closely as possible, the type of intimacy which he had realised between 1851 and 1855 with his first sons in the poor Pinardi House. Years of unadulterated happiness! We have ourselves known some of those who

experienced it and could only speak of it with tears in their eyes. " We were short of everything," said they, " but how happy we were! "

When the boys had returned to work and the washing-up was done, Mother Margaret, often with her son's assistance, sat in the window corner and, until nightfall, went on mending and darning and stitching, when she was not drenched in her huge weekly wash. At the age of thirty, she had only three youngsters to attend to, and now, at sixty-five, her son committed dozens of them to her care, to keep their linen clean and their clothes decent; what a close it was to a hard working toiler's life! But the gentle old woman never complained, except that she could not get through it.

But one day her patience was all but exhausted. Some unusually mischievous pranks must have made the cup overflow, and she went to her son in a very worked-up state.

" I can't do any more," said she. " You see all the trouble I take, and yet nothing comes of it. I can't stand these boys. Today I find all the washing I had hung up trampled on the ground; yesterday they ran all over my growing vegetables. Some come back at night with their clothes all in rags, others without neckties or shoes or handkerchiefs. Some of them hide their shirts, others take my saucepans to play with. It takes hours to find all these things. I have had enough of it, I tell you; it can't go on any longer. And just think how quiet I was at Becchi, doing my spinning. Let me go back to end my days there."

Don Bosco's only reply was to point to the crucifix hanging on the wall. Mother Margaret understood, and her eyes filled with tears.

" You are right; you are right," she said, and then went down to put on her apron.

As for her son, he was indefatigable. No sooner had one project been prepared than another came into his head, and at once it must be started on. Now he was thinking of building a church: what a notion! But he stuck to it strongly, and for good reasons. The shed-chapel which had sheltered the Oratory services for more than four years, was really untenable. First, it was too confined, though it had been enlarged several times; and often they had to carry half-fainting boys out for fresh air. Besides, since it was about two feet below the ground level, during the rainy seasons the floor oozed and those who were attending the services had their feet in the wet; and, lastly, the space was so confined that

there was no room for the more stately ceremonies. There was only one remedy, and Don Bosco quickly decided upon it. A church must be built; and on July 21, 1851, the first stone of the building was blessed. The work went ahead rapidly, thanks to the gifts received by Don Bosco, to the bounties of the royal family, and to the profits of the first of the innumerable lotteries he was to set going. In June, 1852, the church was finished and opened for public worship by the rector of the parish.

The Archbishop of Turin, Mgr. Fransoni, the very one who had ordained Don Bosco and had always strongly supported his Oratory, was to have presided at this consecration, but he had been nearly two years in exile at Lyons, having been driven from his country for his courageous defence of the rights of the Church against the claims of the civil power. In addition to the political and financial difficulties, the apostle was working in the midst of a seething popular movement and had to face those which arose from the irreligion of the authorities. Italy was then governed by the radical party — D'Azeglio, Rattazzi, Lanza, Siccardi, Casati, Quintino Sella — and in a few years a course of sectarian legislation was about to laicise the state fundamentally. From February 17, 1848, till November 13, 1859, a series of at least nine anticlerical and anti-catholic laws were carried, many of them known by the names of leading radicals.

All these laws only passed through the Chamber and the Senate after a press campaign had prepared the way for them, presenting their arrangements in a favourable light, and justifying them on grounds of utility or equality, if not for religious reasons. Hence arose amongst the good people of Piedmont a censorious spirit with regard to the clergy, the religious orders and their houses. An anticlerical wind was blowing, and we know how much more difficult a priest's work becomes at such times as these. Many refrained from making any kind of fresh start for fear of the coming storm.

But it was not so with Don Bosco. Hardly had his church been consecrated when he proposed to erect a building to take the place of the poor Pinardi House, which was indeed too cramped and uncomfortable. " Now that our good God has a place to dwell in, we must find a place for His sons," he said. These sons, whom he wanted to shelter in every way, were either poor orphans leading a miserable existence God knows where, or else boys who urgently needed to be saved from the dangers

of the street or even of their own families. All these unfortunates belonged to his Oratory, and every Sunday evening he saw them go back to their haunts of ruin with sadness in his heart. There was no time to lose. The accommodation for the boarders must be increased twofold or threefold as soon as possible.

At the very beginning of July, 1852, the work was put in hand; on the right of Pinardi House arose a building of two floors with a loft and a playground at the entrance, and it was roofed in at the end of November. The work had been done quickly, too quickly perhaps. In addition to the poor quality of some of the materials, this hurry may explain the catastrophe that brought down the whole building to the ground on the night between the second and third of December. Turin had been drenched with rain for a whole week; it stopped only for five minutes to fall still more heavily. These fearful floods therefore proved too powerful for the resistance of a very new structure, too hastily erected and none too conscientiously. It collapsed all at once with a tremendous crash which terrified the whole dormitory where Don Bosco and his thirty little boarders were peaceably sleeping. All had to be done over again. They waited for the spring of 1853 to start afresh.

This misfortune happily moved many a heart; and when the building was finished, generous gifts flowed in. Among these early benefactors, who continued *per fas et nefas* faithful to Don Bosco and his merciful enterprises, was the Duchess de Montmorency-Laval, *née* Constance de Maistre a daughter of the great philosopher, who wrote to her from St. Petersburg the famous letters to be found in all anthologies, and the Marquis and Marchioness Fassati, also *née* Marie de Maistre. Throughout the story of the foundation, the growth and spread of one of the finest forms of the apostolate of modern times, we shall meet this illustrious name mingled with the endeavours and labours and needs of the man of God.

Finished in the month of October, the new house was at once large enough to afford shelter to sixty-five boys. Then it was proposed to lengthen it towards the left. Between the church of St. Francis de Sales and the new building, the old Pinardi House awaited the work of the pickaxe, which destroyed it in 1856. No sooner was the old shed down than in its place rose a structure that was joined on to the former one and doubled its extent and linked it up with the church.

The latter structure also had its misfortune. At the beginning of August it was about to be roofed in, when a workman's carelessness broke all the ceilings into fragments. A beam slipped out of his hands and fell upon the last one that had been finished, which collapsed and carried away the two others under its weight: in a moment nothing was left amidst the four walls but a heap of plaster. Our builder was indeed unlucky, or rather the powers of evil appeared to be conspiring against his enterprise. Undismayed he set to work once more, and next winter there was room enough to provide shelter for a hundred and fifty poor little fellows in the long building now completely finished.

Two quite distinct groups of boys made up this fine family. First, the little apprentices who started every morning with a " snack " in their pockets and a few pence in their purses for their work in the town, where they were often visited in their workshop or factory by their great friend Don Bosco; and the Latin pupils. Among the unlucky customers who fell to his lot Don Bosco was quick in discerning those who were of a finer grain than the rest: the children of families ruined by the war, boys of slighter build but quick minded and wide awake, possibly with vocations which, like his own, could find no way of attaining to success. These youngsters were not made for handling masons' and carpenters' tools but for learning and books. He would do what he could with them; at any rate they would make capital clerks. Hence Don Bosco opened a class of secondary education for this type of boy. But he had no teachers. Later on, and very soon, he was to get them; but now he had to resign himself to sending them into the town to learn the rudiments of Latin.

Happily Don Bosco had already won people's sympathies in all directions; as high up as the third form, an old friend who had grown grey in the work, Signor Bonzanino, mixed the pupils of the Oratory with his own; and in the higher classes there was the excellent Don Picco, who took amongst his own rhetoricians those of Don Bosco. The oldest religious of the Salesian Congregation, Cardinal Cagliero, Don Rua, and Don Francesia, belonged to that generation which, with their satchels under their arms, set off in small parties every morning to go to the houses of these old and good masters to translate Sallust or to scan the verses of Horace.

The half boarders led this sort of life for about six years; then

gradually — for nature makes no leaps, says the proverb — both apprentices and students returned to the House, never more to leave it. Walls arose to make an enclosure round their dwelling, and the " internate " was established. How did this come about?

Disturbed on seeing his sons pick up contagious doubts and evil desires in the workshop, the timber yard and in the street, such as were disseminated in them by pictures and newspapers and bad companions, Don Bosco decided to bring all his little world of youths back to himself. For domestic reasons — his family had to be shod and clothed — in 1853 he had to open a shoemaker's and a tailor's workshop in a corridor of the old Pinardi House; and two years later, to keep some other boys from external risks, in the new building he started carpenters' and binders' shops; a few years afterwards, the thought of missionary work urged him to establish a small printing press; and lastly, the extension of his premises having put at his disposal enormous quantities of iron, a locksmith's ironwork shop was set up. Afterwards other trades were added to complete this university for apprentices. But from the beginning of 1856, all his young apprentices were boarders within the enclosure.

In the same way, in October of that year, the Latin scholars ceased to take their lessons in the town. The first rhetoricians, on leaving Don Picco's class, in their turn became masters and started class after class in the humanities, from the sixth form to the third. Again the method was a success: the officers had sprung from the ranks, the framework was fashioned from the mass. And henceforth the typical Salesian House had come into being. When it overflowed all over Italy and all over the world, it only reproduced this original pattern, slowly developed under the pressure of circumstances, from 1846 to 1856, by the hands of a humble priest who was endowed with a rare gift for organisation and adaptation.

And note by what a series of insensible transformations the organism grew from the poorest of embryos. First a band of children who are taught the catechism; this band rapidly changes into an Oratory, which keeps on growing and growing. For nearly a year it is on the lookout for a nest, and no sooner is that found than all the wheels are set in motion, especially the evening lessons which attracted to it and held under its influence youths who became ever more and more interested.

But amongst these followers there are unfortunate ones who are harassed by poverty or danger; they have to be protected, and so we find a projected boarding house soon hanging on to the Oratory. At first it is but a beginning, for Don Bosco has not work enough for so many hands, just as he has no masters for the élite of the boys whom he has spurred on to study. But as soon as he has premises at his disposal, workshops will be set up; as soon as he has the teachers, classes will be started. To build the former and to form the latter took a little over five years.

" I let myself be guided by events," Don Bosco used to say to those who went into ecstasies over his manifold enterprises. And of a truth this great realist always found his inspiration — under God — in the circumstances in which he had to act, in the means at his disposal, in the happy winds that blew; but often, too, as a great man of action he dominated life and bent things and men to his ardent dreams as an educator. Supple in spite of his persistence, firm despite of impediments, driving straight to his end by the shortest and surest ways, such do we find him, from the age of thirty, eminent as an apostle and leader.

Apparently his helper of every moment, his old and beloved mother, now the mother of all his children, was only waiting for the final establishment of his Oratory to leave this life in which she had toiled so hard. Henceforth they could get on without her; the house was finished; sympathy flowed in upon them from all sides; spurred on by her example a band of devoted Christian women had started a workroom which looked after the linen of these hundred and fifty boys; only dark spot remained — poverty. But never mind. Providence was there to wipe out any adverse balance. So what was left for her to do in this world? Her work was done, and well done. This was Heaven's mind also, and an attack of double pneumonia bore her away in a few days to the gates of life. This was at the end of November, 1856. Her robust Piedmontese constitution withstood the attack for more than a week but it overcame in the end. On November 24 her confessor, the good Father Borel, administered the Viaticum. Joseph and John, her two sons, were there, both overwhelmed with grief. The whole household was in prayer; a flood of sadness inundated the children's hearts, for in her they had found a love of which death had robbed them. Of her devotion, which embraced all her son's poverty-stricken heritage, might be said in the words of the famous line: *Chacun en a sa part, et tous l'ont tout entier.*

She was the vigilant eye of the Home, ever anxiously wakeful and always untiring, she was its mother; there is all that can be said. And now she was about to leave them. The very thought of it overwhelmed all these poor boys, whether small or big; and they persisted in thinking that Heaven would work the miracle they were praying for.

But they were mistaken. On November 25, at three o'clock in the morning, Mother Margaret gently breathed her last. When her two sons who were watching her painful agony perceived that her heart beat no longer in this world, they looked at one another in alarm at the thought of the void they had to face, then threw themselves at the face of the corpse with long-drawn sobs.

Two hours later Don Bosco left the Oratory with one of the older members: he was going to the Consolata, his mother's favourite church, to say Mass for the repose of her soul, whose hidden devotion had relieved him of so many anxieties. " And," he said to the Consoler of Christians before leaving her sanctuary, " you must fill the vacant place. My great family must have a mother; and who can it be but you? I entrust all my children to you. Watch over them now and for ever." Never was an act of entire abandonment more fully and divinely ratified; the whole story of the works and foundations was nothing but a long poem written by two composers: the man of God worked indeed; but behind him in the shadow, at every dangerous turn, was an unseen and directing hand, that of the ever kindly Virgin, the watchful and mighty Shepherdess, who, on November 25, 1858, was placed in charge of his immense flock.

This blessing had long rested upon the labours of our Saint. In fact, what a road had been traversed in ten years! Just recall the facts. In 1846 the young priest unfolds his future projects to his friends: " Yes, we shall have a church and playground, huge-buildings and workshops and classes, foremen and masters." They looked at him in alarm; they even tried to put his overworked brain under the restraint of a rest cure. Ten years ago by, and now his prophecy is already realised: the church of St. Francis de Sales has been built, a hundred and fifty boys are under shelter, four workshops are working at full strength, four classes are being taught Latin, and ten young clerics, under Don Bosco who has given them their cassocks, take a large share of the continuous work of the Oratory. What must the sceptics of ten years ago think

of such results? Never mind. Their eyes have been opened. One of them, Don Pacchiotti, the third chaplain of the Barolo Refuge, along with Father Borel and Don Bosco, was invited one Sunday in the summer to preach to Don Bosco's boys in the church of St. Francis de Sales. When the sermon was over, and after Benediction, he came to the refectory of the little community to take a modest meal in the company of the young clerics. Glasses were being clinked when Don Bosco came in to greet and thank his old friend. But before he had time to open his mouth Don Pacchiotti anticipated him: "Ah! dear Don Bosco," said he, looking at him with deep emotion and seizing him by the shoulders with both hands, "now I believe in all you used to say to us long ago. Playgrounds and workshops and classes and clerics and a world of children. We used to smile then, we used to pity you and take you for a madman. But you were not mad. I see now your madman's dream realised before my own eyes. My dear, dear friend!"

And the good Don Pacchiotti, the former doubter, said no more. His heart was too full for speech.

The «side» apostolate

One might have supposed that the care of an important Oratory — five hundred day boys and a hundred and fifty boarders — would have fully engrossed the activities of this good priest; but far from it. His zeal was insatiable and all the more enterprising because he was always calm and smiling. His placidity of mind, tone and manner was one of the apostle's most astonishing traits. All those who had to do with him were struck by it. He tackled immense tasks as if he were at play, without feverishness or precipitation, very quietly and easily. Yet this bearing was not due to his natural disposition, for as a child be was fiery. His imperturbable calmness, his self-control were the result of a strong inward conviction impressed upon his mind by the memory of Comollo's gentleness, and by his daily endeavours to attain it himself. His mildness and his constant smile were a conquest as they were in the case of his model, St. Francis de Sales. A laborious conquest but how beneficent! Thanks to it, all his means and all his moments were at his disposal. It is excitement that muddles people's minds and causes them to waste time; calmness is essentially economical. There is, then, no need to be astonished at seeing Don Bosco, alongside of his Oratory. accepting or going in search of a surcharge of work for which we should not have thought that he could possibly find the time.

For some years people have been accustomed to rave about the timeliness and the results of that recently initiated apostolate which has been labelled with the name of the *Oeuvres de midi* (The Midday

Retreats). It consists in gathering the *midinettes*[1] together between 12.25 and 12.55 in some church near their workrooms for the purpose of giving them short instructions which they could not get at any other time, as a preparation for Easter or other great feasts. After finishing a very quick lunch at a restaurant or on a seat in the gardens, they swarm into church to satisfy their famished souls with spiritual food served out to them by specialists. Already Don Bosco was practising this kind of apostolate in 1849, but for youths.

It was at Christmas in that year that he tried gathering into a fairly central church, that of the Confraternity of Mercy, not only the boys of his three Oratories in Turin, but all whom he could muster in that town. He wanted to purify their souls before the end of the year. To attain this result, this man — he was indeed a pioneer, for the year was only 1849 — began with having fifteen hundred notices printed, which he begged the parish priests to put up at their church doors, and he sent them, to all the chief employers in the town, and had them exposed in the most frequented public places. This appeal was specially addressed to the boys' parents, to their masters and foremen, and to all who might keep them from attending the services. In the interest of the youths and of their apprentices, he begged that they might be left free at such hours. Suspecting that many might turn a deaf ear to his appeal, he paid them private visits to convince them of the good these religious gatherings might do.

The Retreat timetable was ingeniously drawn up. At 5.30 a.m., Mass and Instruction; at Midday, Mass and Pulpit Dialogue; at 7 p.m., Instruction and Benediction. The Retreat was to last a week and end up with a General Communion.

Despite the early hour and artic weather, the youths gathered by hundreds in the church of Our Lady of Mercy. Especially at midday for the pulpit dialogue, the church was too small to hold its youthful congregation, so eager to hear two preachers of renown carrying on a discussion in their own Piedmontese dialect. For Don Bosco, to ensure the success of his enterprise, had chosen orators who could

1 *Midinettes* — this name, given to young dressmakers, is said to be derived from *midi* ("midday") and *dinette* ("quick lunch"), because they go out for a snack for lunch at 12 o'clock.

" draw," amongst whom we must name first good Father Borel who never failed him.

The result of the course of instructions was consoling. The first days of the retreat the confessionals were taken by storm, and the four preachers found them full of penitents until a very late hour at night. On December 29, the closing day of the mission, it seemed the celebrant would never come to an end administering Holy Communion to those who had received absolution. As a memento of these days of grace Don Bosco, at the end of the last meeting, handed to the hundreds of apprentices a two-fold leaflet, giving in eighteen paragraphs counsels of the highest Christian wisdom. The tract was entitled: *The Advice of a Friend of the Young on the Needs of Today.*

As a first experiment, this was a masterly stroke. From every side, in view of the moral conversions achieved by this retreat, he was begged to repeat it. For many years in succession the church of Our Lady of Mercy at Christmas witnessed the return of this noisy crowd of youths who came to refresh their souls under the preaching of trained speakers. Later on, the carrying on of this enterprise passed into the hands of an association of the Catholic workmen of Turin.

Like Ozanam, Don Bosco thought the best defence for the purity of his sons was an active life of charity and self-sacrifice. It must be admitted that most lads who have been corrupted with vice have become so because they have never found at the right moment a strong arm to fling them panting into the pool, while the waters were still seething. Don Bosco was always on the watch for opportunities for self-sacrifice in order to plunge his Sons boldly into the midst of them; and in 1854 cholera broke out in Turin, and thus provided him with a wonderful opportunity.

At the end of July, in splendid weather, the scourge came from the south of Italy and fell upon the town. Cases increased in number with disconcerting rapidity; at the end of the first week, there were fifty or sixty a day, and sometimes the mortality rose to sixty per cent. In three months the cases amounted to two thousand five hundred, of which fourteen hundred were fatal. The insanitary state of some quarters and the repulsive filth of too many garrets actively contributed to the excessive death rate. The Valdocco district, where the Oratory was situated, was one of the worst; there, in the month of October, they reck-

oned as many as four hundred deaths. And death's blows were all the more appalling because, from the very beginning of the disease, the poor unfortunates were abandoned by all their terrified neighbours. To combat the plague by confining it, the Municipal Council opened two lazarettos in the two most contaminated parts of the town. But then a problem supervened: where could be found those sufficiently devoted to search out the isolated cases and bear them off to the fever asylums? A cholera victim automatically created a void around himself, and no one would come near him, so violent and so dreaded was the contagion.

From the very beginning Don Bosco was rushing everywhere to the bedsides of the sick and dying, giving them his spiritual and charitable assistance, and he quickly saw that, considering the extent of the evil, nohting but a band of devoted young people could render such heroic aid to the stricken town. Then, without hestitating, he made an appeal to his bigger lads: fourteen of them immediately gave in their names, and thirty others imitated them within a few days. With the zeal of these forty, splendid work was done, and it was methodically organised. Part of the young folks lent a hand in the lazarettos, and another part of them in people's families; and another group was charged with visiting workmen's houses to hunt for unfortunate cases abandoned by their relations; and a picket was left on the watch at the Oratory to answer any and every call. No one hesitated to come and beg for help at any hour of the day or night. For more than two months these forty young fellows were absolutely run off their legs. And yet not one of them was attacked by the disease. The protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary was visibly over them, for if, at the beginning of their new business, they really took care to use antiseptics, washing and using disinfectants after each expedition, yet at the end they did not worry about it but trusted to Providence.

Many of the poor sufferers who had been helped in their garrets by the young volunteers were in a state of abject poverty. Mother Margaret had to turn out the wardrobes of the house: sheets, blankets, shirts, all the linen in the cupboards had to go. Every one of Don Bosco's boys wanted to help the poor people in their miseries and refused to wear anything but what he had on his back, and each would do with as little bedding as possible. One day a boy came to ask for a sheet for a sick man lying on a wretched pallet. Mother Margaret had searched every

corner in vain. She could only find an altar cloth. " There, boy take it." And joyfully the boy flew off like an arrow to wrap up his patient.

We must not suppose that it was the work of one day to bring these young fellows to the point of laughing at danger and despising it. No. Their first contact with the terrible scourge filled them with trepidation. One of them was unable to endure the sight of these livid features, foaming mouths, dreadful convulsions and terrifying death throes; on the threshold of the room where he was to begin his work, he fainted away. Happily, Don Bosco was close at hand and carried him out, brought him to his senses and restored him with a cordial.

These three months may indeed be said to have been months of superhuman toil for both the Father and his Sons; they endured it with a virile courage which brought them the praise of all men of worth and even of some others too.

On December 8 of this same year, in Rome, Pius IX, surrounded with more than two hundred Cardinals, Patriarchs, Archbishops and Bishops, solemnly proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin; it was the day chosen by Don Bosco to thank God and His Mother for having so visibly protected his roof under the tempest, and for having made him the Father of a family of whom he could so justly be proud.

It must also be said that his hold upon the hearts of the young was almost irresistible. One day he attempted and successfully achieved the astounding feat of making a whole day's excursion with three hundred juvenile offenders, whom he took out of Turin, without any assistance from the police, and then brought back quietly to their cells. About Eastertide, he specially loved giving a preparatory retreat to these unfortunate lads. In 1855, he chose the chief reformatory of Turin, the Generala, as it was called, as the objective of his spiritual campaign. God blessed it so abundantly that, after the final general Communion, Don Bosco wanted to give the poor fellows a day's relief by taking them out for an excursion to Stupinigi, a little village about six miles from Turin, where a pretty royal park would enable the lads to enjoy themselves in freedom.

For this purpose he betook himself to the Governor in charge of all the prisons of Turin to get the necessary permission. This request im-

mensely startled that officer, and he looked at Don Bosco as if he wondered whether he were not a little bit unhinged.

" But I am quite in earnest," said our apostle, " and I beg you to give your consideration to my request."

" Listen, my dear Father; however much I may wish to please you, on my own authority, I cannot possibly waive the rule particularly in this matter. I believe the consequences of such an authorisation would be disastrous."

" Is that the last word you have to say? "

" The very last."

" Then, with your permission I will go higher still and speak to the Home Department."

" Just as you please, Don Bosco."

The Home Minister, Urban Ratazzi, listened to the strange request both with surprise and interest.

" Well, all right. It's agreed. Only too pleased to oblige you, dear Father. Choose your day, and let me know in time to issue orders to the police. Just a few men in plain clothes shall follow at a safe distance to keep the poor wretches from yielding to any temptation."

" You are too kind, your Excellency, in thus granting my proposal; but probably I have put my case badly. I am asking for a whole day's freedom for these young people. I don't want anyone's help, not even these officers in disguise. I pledge myself to bring you back all your prisoners to their cells in the evening."

" You won't bring back ten, Don Bosco."

" Only trust me; I tell you, I will bring them back, all of them."

Ratazzi was curious to see how his experiment would turn out. He therefore gave the good priest full powers.

One cool spring morning the two heavy gates of the Generala opened for the egress of a crowd of boys affectionately gathered round a priest. At the gates, after the last of the young offenders had passed out, stood the warders, shaking their heads and muttering " Their ranks will be rather thinner when they come back."

It was a lovely day. They had taken their lunch with them, carried by an old donkey that headed the expedition. By a shady road they reached Stupinigi, and the gates of the royal park were opened for these unexpected visitors. On the grass many games were played, and the

end of the day came unnoticed. Then they had to retrace the road back to the reformatory. Having walked so much since sunrise and having flung himself so much into all the wild games, having taken such a large personal share in everything that was going on, in the evening Don Bosco could do no more. The young folks noticed it, and the donkey, now unloaded of his morning burden, was requisitioned to carry their great friend, whom they accompanied with grateful hearts in a procession, as noisy as it was affectionate, all the way to Turin. It was in this array that, at nightfall, the young offenders of the Generala returned quietly to their prison beneath the wondering gaze of the warders who could not understand the miracle. Not one was wanting. Moreover, if anyone had tried to escape, he would have been quickly recalled to duty by three of the toughest customers of the pack, three Herkulean rascals with horrible records, who had sworn at the start to smash in anyone's head if he gave the least trouble to their benefactor. Once more the hearty confidence displayed to lads, only yesterday steeped in vice, had raised them above themselves.

But it was not only in Turin that the " side " apostolate of the Servant of God was manifested during these years, the whole of Piedmont contended for his persuasive eloquence. The most detailed of his biographers wonders whether a single parish in his little country had missed seeing him ascend the pulpit. Novenas, triduums, sermons for the Forty Hours, panegyrics, jubilees, missionary sermons, his apostolic zeal accepted all the invitations he received from his brethren, and God knows how often they took undue advantage of him! In yielding to their pressure, Don Bosco not only thought of the probable effects of his preaching, he also thought of the friendships and associations he might establish which would be so beneficial to his Oratory, and he cherished the hope of finding amidst the good country folk, hitherto so well protected, vocations among the young who would hereafter help him in his work. How many valuable lieutenants did he thus bring back from his apostolic journeys throughout Piedmont! Let us take three names at haphazard. It was at one of his services at Castelnuovo, his own country, that the Servant of God picked up the little Dominic Savio, who was to be raised to the altars of the Church, and the young Cagliero who, before becoming a Cardinal, led the first missionary expedition sent forth by the Salesians; and it was in similar circumstances that he

brought back, from None, little Paul Albera, who was to be one of his successors as the Head of the Salesian Congregation.

This form of apostolate was carried on by the Holy Founder until 1860, despite all the anxieties of his original foundation. Afterwards, he had to restrict his efforts; and finally, about 1865, he had to give up such work altogether. But for twenty years he devoted to it a large portion of his few spare moments; and he deserved no little credit on that account.

Indeed, one must have known Piedmont as it then was to form any idea of the hardships of those journeys. The means of communication, apart from three or four great lines, were reduced to the old diligence, taking hours and hours to cover twenty miles of ruinous roads. In winter, your teeth chattered with cold in spite of the straw beneath your feet; in summer, you were stifled with your close packed fellow passengers. The poor preacher finished his journey utterly exhausted. Happily, public speaking pulled him together. While he was at the Convitto, he had prepared himself for it. He had saved " enough to live on," as the saying goes; more than hundred sermons upon different subjects, a course of popular addresses for an eighteen days' mission, several retreats for the religious of both sexes, and for adults and young folks; novenas, triduums and panegyrics filled his exercise books as a young priest. He had hoarded up then, and now his stores were poured out for his attentive hearers who literally drank in his words.

Not that he was very eloquent, in the ordinary sense of that adjective. His warmth was kept well under control, his voice was never raised to a shout, his gestures were moderate and his actions measured; he had a very clear tenor voice, with a wonderful articulation; and his general tone was one of serenity, gravity and sadness, indefinably blended. All who have heard him dwell upon this last characteristic; the truth fell from his lips with an accent of melancholy which made it more attractive. In fine, his eloquence was of a friendly and popular kind; it was not at all solemn or stiff or pompous, but just had the pleasing simplicty of fatherly talk.

The substance of his instructions consisted of the great Christian truths; he never wandered to take up some popular fad or any subject of a secular character. His theme was as old as the Gospel, and he rejuvenated it with anecdotes and examples and parables, with the tone of

deep conviction with which he treated it, with the practical application he made of it. And usually the most striking success crowned his efforts.

It must also be said that heaven too often collaborated in a most evident manner with the preacher. The story of what happened to him at Montemagno is famous. It was the country of his good friends the Fassatis, and he had been invited there in 1864 to preach the triduum preparatory to the Assumption. The whole district had been suffering for months from an inexorable drought. Most of the harvest — grapes, maize, potatoes and vegetables — was threatened with ruin. The consternation of the poor peasants was painful to see. In his first sermon some mysterious impulse urged Don Bosco to make a sudden promise that rain would fall if they invoked the Blessed Virgin when in a state of grace. " Come for these three days to the parish services," he said in substance, " make a good confession, do your best to prepare for a fervent Communion on the day of the feast, and I promise you in Mary's name that the rain will come to refresh your thirsty land."

" Your courage is fine," remarked the rector of the place when they were in the sacristy.

" Courage? What do you mean? "

" In promising rain next Monday."

" Have I done that ?"

" Well now. Just ask the sacristan. Why, he will repeat what you said, word for word, and there is no mistake about it, I can assure you."

In fact, never was the church so crammed. It was literally packed daily at each of the three instructions; the confessionals were taken by storm every evening, and Don Rua and Don Cagliero, who had accompanied the preacher, long afterwards remembered the sore toil they had to confront during those days.

Meanwhile, in the neighbouring parishes, bets were made as to whether it would rain or not.

" Will it rain, Don Bosco? " asked the parishioners of Montemagno, when they met him on the way from the presbytery to the church.

" Purify your hearts," he replied imperturbably.

Finally, the sun rose on the feast of the Assumption. Never had it burned more fiercely. Don Bosco began to wonder whether he had not rather tempted Heaven with his promise of rain. Midday came, and the sky was clearer than ever. At the end of the meal at Marchese Fassati's

house, the preacher withdraws to his room to arrange the thoughts he was about to set forth after Vespers. From time to time he casts a glance at the horizon: it is as clear as a mirror. At last, the bell rings for the service.

" Whatever shall I say to these poor people," thinks Don Bosco, " if the Madonna fails to grant me her help? "

" This time, Don Bosco," says the landowner, meeting him on the way to the sacristy, " the fiasco is a final one. I don't see how you can get out of it."

" John," then said the Servant of God to the sacristan, " John, just go behind Baron Garafoli's château, and see if nothing is showing on the horizon."

" Nothing at all," reports the man two minutes later. " In the direction of Biella, there is just a small cloud, but it amounts to nothing."

" Very well," says Don Bosco, " give me my stole; I am going into the pulpit." And deep down in his heart he prays. " O Blessed Virgin Mary, it is not my honour that is now at stake, but yours. What will the people who have been jeering at my promise for the last three days think of your power? And what will be thought by the good Catholics of Montemagno, who have been so edifying during the same three days, hoping you would give them rain? Dear Mother, answer their prayers."

In the meantime, the last verses of the *Magnificat* were being chanted, and Don Bosco was on his way to the pulpit. The church was full to bursting, crowded up to the Communion rail. Now appears Don Bosco, and recites a fervent *Ave Maria* along with the multitude, and then rises and begins his sermon. At this moment, through the window-panes the sky appears to be darkening; the preacher has hardly finished three sentences when a dreadful thunderstroke crashes forth, followed by a second, and then by a third. A joyful murmur runs through the crowd, for now the flashes of lightning succeed one another almost uninterruptedly, and the rain pours down heavily and steadily, pattering against the windows. You can imagine what a hymn of thanksgiving came from the lips of the preacher, and how eloquently he unfolded his timely subject, that every Christian ought to have confidence in the goodness of Mary. When Benediction was over the rain kept on falling, and the congregation had to wait a long while under the peristyle of the church for a slight clearing.

Mary had not done things by halves, she had jealously safeguarded the honour of her name.

We cannot follow Don Bosco through all the countries, parishes and surroundings which had the privilege of rekindling the fire of their faith with the help of his ardour; that would take us too far. But we cannot close this chapter without mentioning a place dear to the devotion of the Catholics of Turin, a place where Don Bosco went into retreat for a few weeks every year.

In the valley of Lanzo, which connects the capital of Piedmont with Savoy, in the region of Bessans, a little above Lanzo itself, about three thousand feet up, rises a peak at the confluence of two slides, one belonging to the Stura, the other to Coassolo, a sanctuary which has quite a story attached to it. Dedicated to St. Ignatius Loyola — whence its name — it was built in the sixteenth century on this crest which overhangs the valley, by the good inhabitants of the place, many a time protected in their needs and dangers by the great Founder of the Jesuit Order. In 1667 the sanctuary, the renown of which was continually increasing, was entrusted to the Jesuits, who made it a centre of pilgrimages. It was much frequented until 1768, when the Society of Jesus was suppressed in Piedmont.

When the departure of the Fathers, both the church and the adjoining property — that is to say, the whole of the hill covered with a thick oak forest — were transferred to the archiepiscopal domain; and gradually, for want of chaplains specially allotted to the service of the church, the pilgrimages fell away and died out. It was Don Guala, the Founder and Superior of the Convitto Ecclesiastico, who revived it at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He quickly saw that this solitary place, in its charming surroundings and with its bracing air, was just what was wanted for reviving the souls of priests and people who wished to make a retreat and to meditate on the great truths of the presence of God during the heats of summer. He obtained the use of it without difficulty from Mgr. Buronzo, the Archbishop of Turin, and spent between £3,000 and £4,000 of his private means in restoring the broken-down church and premises, increasing the number of rooms for the retreatants, fitting up the inner cloister, and above all in making a carriage drive from Lanzo to the church to get rid of the need of riding up to the place on mule-back. Then, on being appointed

rector of the church, he inaugurated the Association for Retreats at the beginning of 1810. Ordinarily, two retreats for priests and two for laymen were given at Sant'Ignazio's in the course of the summer. The laymen's retreats were particularly frequented by the leading members of society and their sons from Turin, but also by persons of more modest means, for whom the religious associations of the town, with the Opera Pia di San Paolo at their head, paid the retreat expenses. On the death of Don Guala, St. Joseph Cafasso took the work in hand, and, urged on by his sanctity, it attained to a remarkable eminence. Every year, as long as he lived, he went up to Lanzo to preach the two fixed retreats to the priests of the diocese; and he often helped the preachers of the retreats for laymen.

For this exhausting toil he sought the collaboration of his pupil and dependent, Don Bosco. Hence, in July, the Servant of God went up to Sant'Ignazio, where his confessional was one of the most frequented. He did not always go home; when he heard at the last moment that lay retreatants were not taking advantage of the opportunity, he took with him a few young folks to replace them, and they gained the blessings of such profitable days without paying for them. In Don Bosco's life, we may say that Sant'Ignazio played quite a leading role; every year he there recuperated his physical and moral energies; every year he found in its solitude the time for peace and reflection which is needed before taking grave decisions and for the preparation of great undertakings. There, too, by his intercourse with the many penitents who confided in him, he gathered the stores of experience which were afterwards to be poured forth in treasures of good counsel; and lastly, during these weeks devoted to God, he came to know an élite of priests and laymen who were later on to become no small help to him in his many zealous enterprises; for his three Oratories and two-fold boarding school in 1859 required plenty of fresh voluntary helpers. No doubt, Don Bosco had already gathered round him a humble family of religious men, a dozen young clerics who were devoted to him body and soul; but this corps was unequal to the work in hand; he wanted more assistance. Good priests then came forward to help him, with Father Borel at their head, and the saintly Father Murialdo, whose Cause is now going forward in Rome. And in addition to them, these, some of the best names of the nobility of Turin, lent a hand: Count

Cays di Giletta, who was to die as a Salesian, the Marchese Fassati, the Marchese Scarampi, the three de Maistre brothers, Charles, Eugène and Francis, grandsons of the great philosopher, and many more. Where did Don Bosco get to know them? Who had introduced them to him? Pretty often it was Don Cafasso, who was the confessor of all of them; but also they were often Don Bosco's own recruits, enrolled at Turin or at Sant'Ignazio, during the retreats.

Let us conclude what might easily be an interminable chapter with two or three episodes taken at haphazard from a thousand. They testify to the Servant of God's dogged persistence in trying to convert the hearts of the young, to win them back from ignorance and vice and error to the light and grace of God. This constant anxiety that fills the soul of the priest has a name: Christians call it " zeal," and it is but the outward manifestation of a flame ever consuming all the hearts of the saints, the love of Christ which burns to make Him rule in every soul that has been baptized.

One bright spring morning, then, at eight o'clock, Don Bosco was returning from the church of La Crocetta, at the opposite end of the town from Valdocco. To get back, he made straight for the principal station of the Porta Nuova, behind which at that time stretched far away waste ground used for dumping refuse. All of a sudden, he came upon a party of four young rascals with hangdog faces, who appeared to have been on the look-out for him from a distance. Assuming a confident stride he was about to pass them, but they barred the way, and one of them, with a feignedly friendly smile, begged him to settle an alleged difficulty as to which they differed.

" Father, tell us who is right, my friend or I. He says that he is; I say that it is I. Now, you must decide."

Don Bosco then looked round to see if anyone was in sight; not a soul! I am in a pretty pickle, thought he. To get out of it, the best thing I can do is to allure them into the town at all costs: there, I am safe.

" Now decide," said the head of the gang without making the least allusion to the matter of the dispute.

The trap was indeed too obvious. They were going to play a dirty trick on him in two moments. The first consisted in preventing him from running away.

" My good friends," said Don Bosco; " I can't possibly settle the

case here in the open on this bit of waste ground. Come and have a nice cup of coffee with me in St. Charles's Square, and then we can see about it."

"But you will pay for it?"

"Of course; I am inviting you."

The four young vagabonds were tickled by the invitation and fell into step with Don Bosco, and on the way they began talking together like old friends. At St. Charles's Square, in the heart of the town, before any further conversation, Don Bosco said to them:

"Now listen, just do me a little fovour. Here is St. Charles's church: let us go in and say an *Ave Maria.* Then we will sample our cup of coffee."

"You want to dodge us, Father," grumbled the head of the gang.

"No, no indeed. I will pay for the coffee; only you won't refuse to say one little prayer with me."

"We see what you are driving at. You will begin with an *Ave;* and then we shall have the whole of the Rosary."

"When I say a single *Ave,* I mean only one. Come now!"

All five went in, and the gang responded to the priest's prayer as well as they could.

"And now for the cup of coffee," said Don Bosco. They sat down and sampled it like old pals.

"Well, that is not all," remarked Don Bosco, as he paid the bill: "but now we have come to know each other so well, you won't refuse to go a step further with me as far as my house; my mother will give you a snack, that's all."

"Done," cried the four tamed birds in chorus. And so they went down to Valdocco.

During the quarter of an hour they were together Don Bosco became greater friends with the lads, so that no sooner had he reached home and taken off his hat than he asked them point-blank: "Is it long, boys, since your last confession? Yes, of course. And if death befell you as you are now, what would become of you?"

The four pals looked at one another, not knowing what to reply. Then one of them said:

"Well, if all priests were like you, Don Bosco, we should not hesitate to go to confession."

" No need to look for the rest, for I am here myself."

" Yes, but we are not ready."

" Leave that to me; there will be no trouble about it."

And leaving three of the lads in the room, he took charge of the fourth and led him into his bureau. With Don Bosco's help. the young fellow easily made his confession with a true sense of contrition; and two of his friends followed his example. The fourth alone stood out, affirming that he was not inclined to imitate them. But all four left Don Bosco expressing their gratitude to him and promising to come and see him again.

On another occasion, at nightfall Don Bosco was ascending Via Po beneath the arcades running along it from end to end. At a lonely corner he was stopped by an unknown man who demanded his purse with threats. He had an evil eye, shabby clothes and created a disquieting impression, for he looked like a young vagabond who would rather make his living by dubious expedients and evil deeds than by honest work. Don Bosco answered him kindly, and said how sorry he was to see that his needs had led him to act in a way which his conscience certainly must condemn, and then he ended up by making the man tell the story of his wretched life. A few minutes later, he was sitting on the low wall which runs round the Palazzo Madama in the Piazza Castello, with the aggressor on his knees beginning to make his confession. This corner of the Square was dark, and was admirably suited to the operation. But it did not escape the notice of a good canon of the Cathedral who happened to be passing just then. He stopped a moment to consider the scene, but in the dimness could not distinguish the persons engaged in it. That must be no other than Don Bosco, thought he. Nevertheless, to make sure, he waited until the priest and his penitent had gone, and then he ascertained that his guess had been right, and that the Servant of God's aposolate defied both time and place.

This was plainly proved on one occasion when they came to tell him of the miserable state of one of his old pupils whose head had formerly been turned by the Waldensians, and who was now attacked by an irremediable disease and was dying without being able to disavow all his past life, because both night and day the Waldensians were on the watch in the adjoining room. At his request, his mother had ten times begged the parish priest to come to him: but both the rector and

his assistants had been turned out by the infirmarian or by the protestant minister, who alleged sometimes that the illness was not serious, and sometimes that the least disturbance would be fatal to the patient. One day at about two o'clock Don Bosco presented himself with two of his stoutest young fellows, at the sick man's quarters. He ran right into the minister, who stopped him dead.

" What do you want, Father? "

" I want to speak to the man who is ill."

" Impossible. Doctor's orders, you know."

" Come, let me in, I have no time to lose. I will just have a word with his mother, and then I'm off. Hullo! There she is. How do you do, my good woman? And how is your son Peter? "

And as he spoke, Don Bosco walked slowly but steadily in the direction of the dying youth.

" Father, once more I . . ."

" Now stand aside," said Don Bosco, forcibly thrusting the minister away, and opened the door with authority.

" Oh, Don Bosco," said the sick lad, when he saw his benefactor standing alone in the room.

" My dear Peter! How are you? Do you still remember the Oratory? And do you know me? "

" Of course I know you. Unhappily, it is I who have changed, and that all through my own fault."

" Once more and for the last time, Father," interposed the Waldensian pastor, " I beg you to withdraw. Your presence does more harm than good to the poor invalid."

" I have not the least intention of retiring," replied Don Bosco, " so I am going to sit down, for I mean to stay some time with this good lad."

" But who gives you such audacity? " says the minister.

" And who gives you such pretensions? " answered Don Bosco.

" I am the Waldensian minister, Amédée Bert; and this is not the first time we have met."

" So you must know I am the Director of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales."

" But what do you want with this poor fellow? "

" To save his soul."

" He has no more to do with you."

" Why? "

" Because he is enrolled in the Waldensian Church."

" What a fine reason! Why, he has been on my boys' roll more than ten years."

" Well then, you refuse to go away? " insisted the minister.

" Certainly, and not to lose time in useless talk, let us, if you will, make our young friend the judge of our dispute. His reply shall settle our position."

Then, turning to the sick youth, he asked: " Tell me, Peter my boy, what is your wish at this moment? "

" I was born a Catholic; I want to die a Catholic, so there! And I repent of all that I have done during the last few years."

So frank a reply made the minister see that the game was in doubt, if not lost; he took his hat and went off, saying that they would soon hear further from him. There was no time to lose. Don Bosco immediately confessed his young friend. As he had neither written nor preached against the Catholic faith, a retractation was unnecessary. The apostle gave him absolution, and peace was restored to the poor wanderer, who could not express his joy at finding himself once more back in his father's house.

But Don Bosco, anticipating that the Waldensians would seek to retaliate by returning to the attack, could not rest that evening until the sick lad had been conveyed to the Hospital of the Knights of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus, where he died twenty-four hours later with feelings of true contrition and Christian resignation.

Similar episodes could be told by the dozen, each one more dramatic than the last; but we have no room for them. Enough has been said to show the untiring zeal of this young priest, who, in addition to the work of his growing Oratory, found time for such labours as these and for thousands besides. The secret of his prodigious and charitable activities was that he never spared himself; he was always ready to devote himself to everyone who appealed to him for help. " The priest," Father Chevrier of Lyons used to say, " is a man who is eaten up." (Ps. lxviii, 10).

The pen of a ready writer

With his three Turin Oratories, his flourishing boarders' home, his missions on all sides between times, St. John Bosco reached hundreds of the young both in word and deed; but how many others eluded his grasp! His apostolic soul suffered all the more on that account, because in those days a threefold current of error was sweeping through Piedmont. As we have already remarked, a whole world of very tangled political ideas was invading the masses; the wind of anticlericalism was also blowing, and the clergy who did not go down into the arena and take part in the movement, who did not partake of the fancies of a Gioberti or a Mazzini, were singled out and pointed at; and lastly, since the decree for their emancipation, signed in 1848 by Charles Albert, the Waldensians of the higher valleys of Piedmont made proselytes to a disturbing degree.

In the service of these three bad causes, a well written and well paid press undertook to popularise theories that were sometimes rather abstract. Newspapers, weeklies and pamphets worked craftily upon the simple-minded to raise them by degrees to the requisite level. The danger was great, and the young, with their curiosity and inexperience, would inevitably become the first victims of this press campaign. Don Bosco observed this in time, and since his sermons could not deal with it, he tried to reach his objective by means of the pen. At a time when no one foresaw the immense development of the power of the press, in 1844, more than a century ago, he started *The Catholic Library.* His attempt in Italy went almost side by side with that of Mgr. de Ségur in France. Both, too, were inspired by the example of St. Francis de Sales,

the father of the Catholic apostolate of the press, who wrote the first mission tract when he had failed to gather his flock round his pulpit, and used to slip his leaflets of sound doctrine under the doors of his parishioners.

St. John Bosco began his literary career with a biography. At the request of his old fellow students at the Seminary, he made a sketch of the principal features of their friend Comollo. He had been the confidant of his deepest secrets; their two lives had been interwined for more than three years; and, abetting one another, they competed in their fervour in the service of God. Who then was better qualified than he to attempt such a sketch? As soon as he took pen in hand, memories of their common friendship recurred in crowds, and the *Biographical Sketch of Young Louis Comollo* was finished, an exquisite and moving account. Henceforward his new weapon was ready, and he did not cease to wield it until the end of forty-five years paralysis came to stay the hands which had become those of a ready and popular writer.

Don Bosco's second book was a polemical one. At this time, in 1850, the Waldensians were increasing their propaganda in Turin. The Waldensians took their name from a certain Peter Valdez, a rich merchant of Lyons, who at the end of the twelfth century, put himself at the head of a company of " The Poor in Spirit," for the purpose of reforming the habits of luxury and loose living which had found their way into the Church. One day, one of the priests whom he paid to translate and comment on the Gospel in the vernacular, repeated this counsel to him: " If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast; " and Peter Valdez distributed all his goods to the poor and went through the streets and squares preaching poverty. After a time he was surrounded with disciples who followed his way of life in its entirety. This body was without any hierarchy, but their Founder exercised a considerable ascendancy over them. Convinced that his doctrine was orthodox, he went to Rome in 1178 to be presented to Pope Alexander III. The Pontiff received him kindly, approved of his vow of poverty, and permitted him as well as his companions to preach with the consent of the Ordinary. These preachers soon lost their bearings, so that in 1184, at the Council of Verona, Pope Lucius III comprehended under one anathema both the Cathari of the north of Italy, the cousins of the Albigenses of Languedoc, and the " Poor of Lyons."

From schism to heresy proved but a short step, and the Waldensians soon declared that they were the only true followers of Christ. Their *Credo* may be summed up in the following articles [1]:

They believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; Jesus Christ is their " life, truth, peace and justice, their Advocate, Victim and Sacrificer; " He died for the salvation of all believers and rose again for our justification.

They reject Purgatory and recognise only the two Sacraments instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

They consider that the source of truth is to be found solely in the Bible. It is on this ground that they have always repudiated doctrines based upon authority and tradition, images, crosses, relics, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Saints, celibacy of priests, the monastic life, and in fact, all similar human devices, as they say.

This heresy had come down into Italy by the higher valleys of the Alps, especially by the valley of Pellice, where it had dug itself in as behind a rampart. From there it had wound its way through the plain as far as Turin, where its disciples had won the right of propaganda and skilfully crept into popular circles unprotected by their ignorance. They infested the workmen's clubs with cunningly heretical pamphlets, and the harm they wrought in simple minds was considerable. As no one thought of directly opposing this evil apostolate, Don Bosco could not stand still. To the protestant pamphlet he opposed the catholic *tract* with telling effect, and twice a month he or one of his friends wrote for popular reading one of those short, clear, lively and attractive pamphlets which find a public to peruse them with interest from the first page to the last. An adroit and ingenious controversialist, he dealt with subjects of every kind, and variety was his motto. One day he gave a serene exposition of Catholic teaching, another he grappled with some objection of his opponents and made short work of it, a third he wrote a popular account of some great Pope or else a novel with a moral.

God crowned with success this bold campaign undertaken for His glory. These propagandist booklets were named *Catholic Readings,* and they gained an immense circulation. Their low price increased the num-

1 Taken from a Waldensian book, *The Waldensian Church of the Valleys of Piedmont,* by Louisa Williams.

ber of the subscribers, which soon rose to nine thousand and reached even fourteen thousand, a huge figure for that time.

To get a correct notion of this series, we should bear in mind the innumerable little treatises that fell from the fertile pen of Mgr. de Ségur. It had the same simple and popular style, the same clarity and quickness of intelligence. Don Bosco occasionally borrowed a whole booklet from his French rival, and gave it as it stood to his readers in a faithful Italian translation.

The success of this enterprise did not discourage the protestant propagandists. Beaten in one direction, the enemy divised a fresh campaign. At the end of 1853 he launched a harmless-looking Almanac, named *The Fireside Friend,* amongst the people. It cost nothing, and was offered to all comers; it was slipped under doors, flung into livingrooms, scattered amongst those leaving their workshops. And the people devoured it all the more readily because God's name was invoked in it, and it contained tales of conversions and other edifying details meant to hide more dubious material. Don Bosco again took his ready pen in hand and, during August of the year following, while supervising his boys on holiday, he used his spare time in revising the proofs of an Almanac of his own, called *Il Galantuomo,* [1] perhaps untranslatable in another language. In its pages there was something of all sorts: a calendar, astronomical information, a list of fairs, recipes for cooking, money tables, jokes, poetry, appropriate moral and religious reflections, and striking and edifying anecdotes. A large edition was printed, and it was published in October to anticipate the opposition. It was the first Catholic Almanac in Europe. It was to have a long life before it, since it is still carrying on its beneficent mission though against other opponents.

Essentially an educator, Don Bosco naturally felt he had to prepare a *School Manual.* He started on it very early. In 1845, the Subalpine Government decreed that all the Sardinian States should adopt the decimal system; they allowed trades five years for the gradual substitution of the new units for the old Piedmontese standards: the pint, the ounce, the foot, etc.

Don Bosco thought it was an occasion for showing that the clergy

1 The nearest translation might be *The Good Fellow.*

could take the lead in any useful progress. At the beginning of 1846 he brought out his *Decimal Metrical System,* a popular work, as clear as it was concise.

Nor did his effort as a teacher end there: later on, he put into the hands of the teachers in primary schools an excellent *Sacred History,* which is still a standard book, and *History of Italy,* which, as we shall see later on, made more than one enemy for him. Lastly, he compiled a *History of the Church,* which was favourably received by Catholic masters who much needed it.

Whoever aims at reaching the young, finds a fertile field for the apostolate in the school: but such too is the theatre. Don Bosco was bound to try his hand at it, and he started the experiment in his houses at the beginning of 1849. He wrote three little plays: scenes with dialogues, scenes full of the humour of the market place, meant to put on the stage his teaching of the *Decimal Metrical System;* a farce called *The Little Sweep*; and a melodrama in two acts, *Fortune House.*

There is no need to say that among the many kinds of writing attempted by St. John Bosco, treatises on Asceticism took the first place. Many were the religious works with which he fostered the faith of his children and that of adult Catholics. All such contributions found their way into his *Catholic Readings:* little devotional treatises by Mgr. de Ségur, lives of local or recently beatified Servants of God, histories of the chief Catholic devotions, lives of Popes, and of his most exemplary pupils: Dominic Savio, Michael Magone, Francis Besucco, and others.

Finally, he had one more project that haunted his imagination: he wanted to realise it before he died. Alarmed at the dangers to the faith of his boys that accompanied an exlusive study of pagan writers and the signal contempt with which all the works of Christian literature were treated, he undertook a twofold enterprise: that of publishing a revised and expurgated edition of the Latin classics, and that of reprinting the Catholic masterpieces, which by the solidity of their substance and the charm of their style would prove an antidote to the naturalist influence of the former. This colossal enterprise he managed to bring to a conclusion; but in the evening of his life he was to have the grief of never seeing his Collection fully taken advantage of in the measure he would have wished.

Through the pressure of circumstances and the poverty of his means,

Don Bosco had had to have all his popular publications printed by firms at Turin. But for eleven years he had always wanted to start a printing press of his own. In 1861 he realised his dream.

After the greatest difficulties he succeeded in getting a ministerial authorisation; he quickly turned it to good account, and installed a press in a room on the level of his own. The Salesian printing press was a rudimentary affair. Two old rotary machines, a wretched press, both second-hand, a bench and a few racks of type, made by the carpenters of the Oratory; and for motive power nothing but his boys' arms. The lads found the installation rather primitive, but Don Bosco reassured them: " Never mind, never mind. This is only a beginning; soon we shall have two or three, or even ten printing works." And he already seemed to be gazing upon the huge workshops which, throughout Europe and America, in Marseilles, Paris. Liège, Barcelona, Buenos Aires, would be working hundred of machines, no longer driven by human arms, but by electric power, and at the mountain of books, pamphlets and reviews turned out by these presses to provide spiritual food for Catholics throughout the world.

To feed this output, he first mobilised the pens of his friends; they brought relief to his own, and talents as varied as they were original to the defence of the truth. Later on, it was to his sons that he had recourse. He infused his zeal for the Catholic press into his disciples, and one of the four aims assigned to the energies of the Salesians was the apostolate of the printing machine. He thought that the press was indeed *pressing*. The people draw upon the newspaper, the pamphlet, the tract, the novel for their religious aspirations, their social ideals and their rule of conduct. All the more reason for presenting them in every possible shape with the truth that sets men free. Don Bosco felt deeply — from 1865, be it noted — the urgency of this work, and he stimulated his sons to its production. He stirred up their capacities and spurred on their energies. After he had set all his crowd of machines in motion, he desired to have a group of religious writers who would feed his monsters with good " copy." And in this, as in all else — so he acknowledged to Father Ratti [1] who was going over his printing works — he wanted to be in the forefront of progress.

1 Then Professor at the Major Seminary of Milan, and who later became Pope Pius XI.

The following of this ideal used up his scanty leisure. One is astounded at all his work as a publicist, which would have been enough, of itself, to fill any man's life. As a matter of fact — and we have reckoned them up — his fertile pen gave the public more than one hundred and thirty books, pamphlets, tracts, almanacs and plays. When did he find time to write them, with his hundreds of boys to feed, churches to build, congregations to found, missions of all sorts to carry on energetically, countless souls to listen to and enlighten and comfort and cure, and who can say what else? His days belonged to everybody; he had only his nights to himself, even if he had these! Then it was that he leaned over his inkstand and, at his lowly writing table, which still is in existence, covered with his large handwriting the pages with which his apostolic soul would fain sustain hearts tempted to evil ways. How often daybreak found him finishing some manuscript which the head of the printers' staff had come to fetch only the night before for immediate publication! His work as a writer was indeed the daughter of his night watches; it had meant for him many an almost sleepless night.

Moreover, once it very nearly cost him his life. For nearly four years, from 1852 to 1856, during the launching of the *Catholic Readings,* Don Bosco was often attacked in a dastardly way by assassins set in ambush by the Waldensians. His missionary booklets had such a success and brought so many back to God and kept so many others from shipwreck, that they decided to get rid of such an adversary.

Thus, one Sunday evening in the old chapel-shed, while he was explaining the catechism to the bigger boys, a ruffian hired by his enemies climbed on the shoulders of an accomplice over the low wall round the premises and fired his gun at the Man of God through the chapel window. The rascal had aimed well, for the bullet passed between Don Bosco's side and his raised arm and was flattened against the wall opposite. A cry of alarm escaped from the young hearers, followed by a tragic silence. The boys could hardly believe their own eyes, and were struck with horror. " Come," said Don Bosco, with a pleasant smile, " let us go on with our lesson. The man is a poor player — or rather, the Blessed Virgin has put him out of tune. The worst of it is that it was my best cassock, and now it is torn."

Another day, at nightfall, there came a sick call from someone who

was dying close by. Before starting, by way of precaution, Don Bosco summoned four of his big boys to accompany him.

" Don't trouble about that," said the two men who had come to fetch him, " we will come back with you ourselves."

" Oh! " said Don Bosco, " I only want to give them a breath of fresh air, and to let them stretch their limbs. When we get there they can wait for me outside."

On reaching the lodgings of the supposed dying man, Don Bosco discovered a gang of rowdy rascals drinking heavily, and apparently eating chestnuts.

" Wait here a minute," said one of the two men; " I will go and get the sick man ready."

" Have some chestnuts, Father? " asked one of those sitting at the table.

" Thanks. I take nothing between meals."

" Well then, a little drop of wine? It is *Asti,* and some of the best."

" No, don't press me; I neither drink nor eat."

" Only to please us and keep us company."

And without waiting for a reply, the man filled the glasses. Don Bosco did not fail to remark that the bottle was empty with the men's last glass, and to fill his they began a second bottle which was on the mantlepiece.

" Well, your good health, Father."

" To yours, my friends! " said Don Bosco, raising his glass, which he then put back on the table.

" What! you won't drink? "

" I've told you: nothing between meals."

" Now, you're not going to insult us like that," said the man, who felt the opportunity was slipping through their fingers. " If you won't drink the glass of your own accord, we will make you."

They were already suiting the action to the word, when Don Bosco leapt to the door and flung it open. His four lads were there, and he called them in. On seeing these stout fellows, the men resumed their seats, looking rather upset.

" Come," said Don Bosco in the most natural manner conceivable, ' here is one of my boys who won't refuse your excellent *Asti.*"

With these words, he made as if he would take up the glass he had put down on the table.

" No, no," said the scoundrels; " it is not for them, the invitation was for you."

This counter proof was eloquent enough. Don Bosco did not press the matter. He only asked to see the dying man, for that is what he had come for. He was then taken up to a room on the second floor where, beneath a heap of blankets, lay one of the two ruffians who had been to fetch him from Valdocco. Don Bosco pretended that he did not understand the game, but the man could not keep up his part to the end, and burst out laughing, saying, " I will make my confession some other time." Don Bosco then left the place and, under the escort of his sons, regained the Oratory thanking God for his escape.

One summer evening in 1855, a very similar attempt was made upon the Servant of God, but this time he did not escape scotfree. He had been summoned to give the last sacraments to a woman living at Sardi House, almost opposite the Barolo Refuge.

The night was dark and, as the Father had but recently escaped foul play, he decided to take two companions with him.

" There's no need to trouble your children," said the stranger to Don Bosco, " I will come with you myself."

The words only increased Don Bosco's suspicions, and produced an effect which was quite opposite to that intended. Instead of taking two lads, Don Bosco selected four to accompany him; two of them, Hyacinth Arnaud and James Cerruti, were tough fellows and big enough to fell an ox.

The little band came to a rather lonely house. Two of the lads waited at the foot of the staircase; the other two went up to the landing and waited at the door of the room, into which Don Bosco entered alone.

On his entrance, four big fellows rose and wished him good day with an air which was meant to be pleasant; but Don Bosco observed that their expressions were repellent, and also that they were provided with alarmingly heavy clubs.

He drew near the bed on which the supposed dying woman lay suffering from an attack of asthma played to perfection. For a dying person she appeared to have a good and even exceedingly high colour.

An actual photograph of Don Bosco with some of his boys.

Don Bosco begged those who were present to withdraw a little, so that he might speak the more conveniently to the sick woman and prepare her to make a good confession.

" Well, my good woman, are you disposed to be reconciled? "

" Certainly, I will," said she in a voice that was certainly far from weak; " but first of all that blackguard, that gallows bird, the scoundrel you see over yonder, who is my brother-in-law, must ask for my forgiveness; " and with that she poured forth a torrent of abuse.

" Will you hold your tongue, you filthy wretch? " roared one of those present, upsetting the only candle on to the floor with the back of his hand.

Now the room was in utter darkness, and Don Bosco received a blow with a stick, which would have altogether done for him, if it had not slipped off his shoulder.

Without losing his coolness, he at once caught up a chair and covered his head with it. Blows rained like hail upon this improvised helmet which defended his skull. Thus he managed to gain the door and, putting his hand on the latch, he flung his chair at his assailants, and found himself with the two lads who were waiting for him. The whole affair had happened so swiftly that they were left standing motionless.

Once in the street, the youths were alarmed to see that Don Bosco was covered with blood. Happily, his wounds were not dangerous; only, while he was protecting himself with the chair, a blow from the stick had torn the flesh off his left thumb and left the bone bare.

As far as he could in such dramatic circumstances, Don Bosco preferred to remain upon the defensive and to make no use of his strength, which was quite unusual, nor that of his bodyguard, in order to inspire his enemies with respect. But upon one occasion he took the offensive as unexpectedly as victoriously. Returning late from Moncalieri, a big country town close to Turin, he was walking along the parapet at the edge of the lonely road that links the inhabitants of the two centres together, when, turning round suddenly on hearing rapid footsteps close behind him, he saw a villain trying to overtake him and already brandishing his club with the plain intention of bludgeoning him. Don Bosco then made a sudden feint to one side, and as the man lunged by, dealt him a masterly blow on his side. The blackguard rolled into the ditch, howling with pain and out of breath; and Don Bosco, after his little

gymnastic performance, joined a knot of passers-by on their way to Turin. With them he was quite safe. " Help yourself, and God will help you," says the proverb. God's help had been so far conspicuous; and that evening Don Bosco felt that he might well leave the rest in the hands of divine providence.

There is no need to add that Don Bosco never lodged any complaint against his assailants. He immediately forgot their offences and went on his way. He had no illusions about the assailants: the real culprits who paid for these crimes were too highly placed to be made to suffer for them. It would have been merely a loss of time and money to pursue them. The only vengeance he took upon them was to redouble his zeal in his press campaign by making his publications more popular and more attractive.

On principle Don Bosco strictly refrained and made his Sons refrain from political matters. " The burnt child dreads the fire." He had tried his hand at politics for a few months, when he had taken over a dying newspaper; but his tranquility, his sacerdotal work and his purse had suffered too much in consequence. He vowed never to begin again, and he kept his vow. " In an army," he used to say, " you can very well have your shares in the victory without opening fire in the front ranks."

The two things he always tried to infuse into his style were clear simplicity [1] and life. Molière used to read his comedies to his servant, and was only satisfied when he saw that she had grasped his meaning. The son of Alexandre Dumas watched the fireman who had to attend the general rehearsals, and only considered his play was a success when he saw the man was attending up to the last scene. Don Bosco, too, used to read what he had written, first of all to the concierge of the Convitto where he was a boarder as a young priest, and afterwards to his mother, a simple and illiterate woman, but sound and sure in her taste. Some of the chapters of his books were entirely recast: his mother's judgement had been unfavourable.

One day, in order to avoid tautology, Don Bosco had called St.

1 An Anglican clergyman travelling in Italy came across a book, " *The History of Italy*," by Don Bosco. He found it so clear and vivid that he determined to put it into English. (Published by Longmans Green, 1881). In his introduction he refers to the quaint simplicity of the original style which he tried hard to preserve. When the Salesians first came to London, what was their surprise at finding this work by chance on a bookstall!

Peter the " Porter of Paradise," and had used a rather pretentious phrase for the purpose, *clavigero celeste*, " celestial keybearer."

" *Clavigero? Clavigero?* " asked his mother. " Whereabouts is that? I don't know it."

" But it is not a country, mother, it's a business. *Clavigero* means a porter, *portinaio.*"

" Then why not say porter, *portinaio?* Everybody would understand that at once."

For we write to make people understand us; and also to make them read what we write. For this, nothing is better than a sort of thrill in the sentence, something full of warmth and colour, that is to say, life. Don Bosco instinctively felt this. Two features of his prose prove it: his constant appeal to his reader, the old rhetorical figure called interpellation, and his abundant use of dialogue. Nothing wakes a man up like a sudden personal address to himself; and dialogue, when it is natural, is living, it is life caught in the act.

Montaigne somewhere speaks of a style " written just like speech." This was just the style of Don Bosco. He had been so accustomed, and was still so accustomed, to addressing children that he instinctively felt the turn a phrase must take to capture the attention, not only of their ears but of their eyes. His pen set down his word in writing; his books became pulpits for the preacher. This was the main secret of their success.

We cannot but suppose that these works upset the machinations of hell, for one often feels, from the sudden and unexpected hindrances they encounteded, that the powers of evil were making their protest. But heaven acknowledged the services of this good shepherd who, like the one in the Gospel, kept a vigilant watch over the flock and barked at the wolf when it appeared; for, at a critical moment, an unexpected defender was sent him, and this guardian took the form of a dog. It is a characteristic of the lives of some of the great Saints to find the extraordinary power they excercised over the animal world, making it obediently subserve their desires or needs. Think of the episode of the wolf of Gubbio in the life of St. Francis of Assisi. It is in the same way, in the life of St. John Bosco, that we find rising up out of the shadow at his side the head of the good old dog, Grigio — meaning " the Grey one " in the Piedmontese dialect — so called owing to his grey coat. He

was a singular type of creature, an unknown dog, unlovely but not without strength, which refused to have a kennel or dog's food, which lay down where nobody knew, with a dog collar bearing nobody's name, strong on his feet, sharp in the jaw, ready to attack any villain lurking in ambush with a knife stuck in his pocket, but as gentle as a little girl with the boys of the Oratory and looking at Don Bosco with affectionate eyes.

How had the Father come to make his acquaintance? Between the last inhabited houses and Don Bosco's premises there was a very bad spot to be crossed. The Oratory was outside the town in the open country, amidst waste lands where the knots of houses, or some questionable tavern, were few and far between. It was rough ground divided by the Dora, where you constantly ran into thick bushes and into plantations of mulberry trees and acacias. This indented and lumpy tract, these bunches of leafy growths, offered miscreants the best of shelters for lying in wait for their victims. More than once had Mother Margaret trembled when her son did not get home in time. Who could protect him when he was crossing that dangerous corner? Providence took the matter in hand. One autumn evening in 1852, when Don Bosco had scarcely passed the Lunatic Asylum at the edge of the town, a huge watch-dog came to keep step with him and stay at his side. At first Don Bosco shrank back in alarm, but when he saw that the animal looked good-natured and welcomed his caresses, he quietly went on his way. At the door of the Oratory, the dog turned round and went away at the same steady pace. And whenever Don Bosco returned home late, the same thing occurred: his companion waited for him at some turn of the road or at the crossways, and kept him company in the most friendly manner.

Nor was that company always in vain. One winter evening when he was returning home rather late, he rubbed shoulders with someone in Queen Margaret Road who was lying in ambush behind a tree, and twice fired a pistol at him point-blank. Luckily, only the cap went off. Then the man flung himself upon Don Bosco, to finish up with him no one knows how. Assuredly, he would either have strangled him or quickly knocked him on the head, if a terrible growl had not instantly resounded, while a furious beast leapt on to the assailant's back. The wretch scarcely had time to fly, while Don Bosco, recovering from his excitement, was left stroking the good watchdog.

On another occasion two cutthroats, hired by the Waldensians, tried to play a similar trick upon him in a dark street near the Consolata church. Before him were walking two men of doubtful aspect, who were evidently regulating their pace by his. " That looks bad," thought Don Bosco. He turned back to go into the town and find protection. On seeing this, they flung themselves upon him, and threw a sack over his head. By struggling hard, he managed to get out of this awkward hood, but then the stoutest of the two gagged him so hermetically that he could not cry for help. He would have been completely at their mercy, had not a roar of barking broke forth close at hand: it was Grigio. In an instant he had delivered his master, who now was set free. The priest saw one of his aggressors rushing away as quickly as possible, while the other was fastened to the ground and held in respect by the animal's teeth at his throat. " Call off your dog," howled the man, " he is throttling me." — " I will do so, if you promise to leave me alone." — " Anything you like," said the ruffian who could do nothing else. Then Don Bosco spoke to the good dog, which loosened its jaws, and the fellow ran off as fast as he could.

In another case, the wonderful dog held up a whole party of rogues. Don Bosco had just cleared the deserted avenue beyond the last houses of the town, running from the market place to his home. Suddenly, out of a dark corner someone rushed upon him with a stick in his hand. At that time Don Bosco was still a quickfooted runner but the rascal was still faster; and he swiftly caught up the priest. Then, repeating the trick he had tried on the road from Moncalieri, Don Bosco dealt the man such a heavy blow with his fist in the middle of the chest, that he fell to the earth roaring with pain. At this cry, from all the neighbouring bushes arose men who were ready lying in wait to lend a hand in case of need. Don Bosco was already lost; in a few more seconds he would have been killed, when the fierce barking of Grigio filled the air. In a few bounds he was on the spot, and was turning to and fro in all directions round Don Bosco, growling most eloquently and displaying his terrifying teeth. One after another the ruffians dispersed into the adjoining country.

It was a strange animal, and what it did varied according to circumstances. One evening, instead of offering to escort him, it flatly prevented Don Bosco from leaving the house. It stretched across the thres-

hold of the doorway, and nothing could make it budge. For once, it showed itself surly towards its master; had it been necessary, it would have hustled and thrust him back with all the strength of its chest into the interior of the dwelling. Before taking this extreme measure, it was satisfied to growl with its mouth shut. " If you won't listen to me, just listen to the dog: it is more sensible than you are," said Mother Margaret, who had been opposing his going out that night for over half an hour. Don Bosco hearkened to Grigio, and it was well that he did so, for within a quarter of an hour a neighbour ran in to beg Don Bosco not to go out that evening, for he had overheard a conversation which clearly showed that an attack on him was being prepared.

Another evening, after supper, the dog came out into the playground of the Oratory, and all the boys who knew him gave him a treat. The dog, however, seemed to be resigned and melancholy, and just let them have their own way. They jumped on him, and pulled his hair or his ears; but he would take no part in the game, till he was led into the refectory where Don Bosco was finishing a light meal.

" Well, Grigio, old man, what brings you here looking like that? "

And Don Bosco called his faithful guardian to him. Grigio drew near, put his long muzzle on the table, gave his good master a satisfied look, and made no sound.

" What do you want, old fellow? A taste of porridge or a bit of cheese? "

But the dog never stirred. He just took a last look at Don Bosco, turned round, and went away.

On reflection, they saw the reason for his visit. Don Bosco was to have returned very late from his good friends the Fassatis, but the Marchese had brought him back in his carriage fairly early. Then, Grigio, hidden away in some corner or other, and not seeing his protégé turn up, had gone in to see whether he was really back.

And all of a sudden he disappeared when the sectarian persecutions had died down. For twenty-seven years they heard no more of him. But in 1883, one evening when Don Bosco with one of his priests was arriving at Bordighera station by the last train, and, finding no one to show him the way, was wandering through a dark and stormy night amongst all the ruts, the creature barked joyfully and led him back to the Salesian House, which was not expecting him.

And that was the last time anyone ever saw this fine mastiff, chosen by Providence to keep watch over the Servant of God and to protect him against the vagrants suborned by those whom his ready pen disturbed.

The founder of congregations

About 1854, when Don Bosco was doing his utmost to gather round him collaborators imbued with his own spirit, one of his friends asked:

" Why do you want so many cassocks? Three Oratories in a town don't mean the end of the world. A dozen clerics ought to be enough."

" You don't see why I want them, but I do," he replied.

" But what will you do with them? "

" You will see, you will see; only have patience."

He reckoned rightly, for he knew to what a future his Oratory was called by God. Within a few years the course of events would realise his presentiments. In 1863, he was to open his first college at Mirabello; then, a second at Lanzo in 1865; a third at Varrazze in 1869; and once started on their foundations, his Oratory, his ideas, and his method were to go on spreading. As we shall see, in twenty years they were to traverse vast spaces and to surmount all kinds of hindrances. Hence, this period of expansion had to be provided for as soon as possible, and useful collaborators had to be trained.

From 1842, when he was at the Convitto, he had thought of this. Among his first boys he had discerned some whom he had patiently grounded in Latin. His hope was small, the vocations of the pupils were not very clear; and yet the attempt might be made. The result was appalling. One by one the lads broke away. and he had to begin all over again.

Don Bosco made this experiment twice running, and each time met with the same failure. He then turned to the good priests of Turin, who so generously offered him their devotion and their spare time, and with

them he tried to found an embryo community; but he failed. The common life, with its frugality, its discomforts and restraints, alarmed them. For the fourth time he returned to his original idea, and tried to find a few possible candidates for the priesthood among the members of his Oratory; and in 1849 he picked out four. They were four young apprentices; the best educated of them had finished his early training, and the other three could just read and sign their names.

" Would you agree," asked Don Bosco, " to become my assistants in the Oratory? I will help you to make a start, then I will teach you Latin; and if God will, perhaps some day you will become priests. How would you like that? "

" Certainly," answered the four pupils. Next day, they left the workshop and went to study under Don Bosco. Their names are on record: Gastini, Buzzetti, Bellia and Reviglio.

With wonderful ardour they set to work, which was not interrupted by the coming holidays. They worked on steadily for eighteen months, sometimes ten hours a day. A priest who was a friend of Don Bosco helped him in this job, but it was he himself who gave most of the lessons, and that in the most practical manner. His biographer, speaking of these intensive lessons, followed by these recent apprentices, uses this sentence, which reveals an intuition for teaching sixty years ahead of actual practice: " The grammar was rarely opened in school, unless it was to clear up some difficulty met with in the Latin text." Don Bosco saw instinctively that, to save time, grammar should be a gathering of specimens, the pupils collecting the rules in the course of doing their translations or exercises. The grammar was a book to be used like a dictionary.

With this method, in a year and a half St. John Bosco brought on his rhetoricians, and on February 2, 1851, with the written approbation of his Archbishop, in exile at Lyons, he gave them their cassocks. Alas! this fourth experiment proved no more successful than the preceding ones. After attending the lectures of the University of Turin, these four first lieutenants of Don Bosco left their captain in the lurch: two of them soon afterwards gave up their cassocks, and the other two entered the diocesan Seminary. The experiment had broken down once more.

Undiscouraged, Don Bosco set to work again; and this time he was more fortunate. Once, when he was passing by the great market close

at hand, the Turin market place — Porta Palazzo — he met a little fellow of ten on his way to the Christian Brothers' School. The boy asked him for a medal or a picture, and, instead of giving him one, Don Bosco stretched out his hand wide open, and with his right hand made the gesture of cutting it in half: " Take that, little Michael," he said. " What does he mean by that? " thought the boy. Five years afterwards, on the day on which he had himself been clothed with the soutane at Becchi, Don Bosco gave him the key of the enigma: " Little Michael, we will henceforth go halves in everything." The boy's name was Rua, and we shall often meet with him in Don Bosco's life.

To him were afterwards added other companions, almost all young — Cagliero, Francesia, Turchi — boys from the Oratory or little peasant lads from the country; and with this company a Latin class was at last started. Don Bosco was already too busy to do any more than generally supervise these studies. Two of his excellent friends, Professor Bonzanino and Father Pícco, took these willing youths into their classes in the town.

And now we come to an important date: June 5, 1852. For the first time, after evening prayers, Don Bosco gathered his disciples together in his own room. Apparently he was going to give them a simple conference; in reality he was about to drive in his first landmark. How many others was he to stake out before reaching the end of the long road which was so often to encounter all sorts of obstructions! But neither anything nor anybody was to stop the march of his little army, called to make the world its field of operations.

There was much merit in undertaking the enterprise, for never had the religious ideal and the religious habit been as greatly despised as they were then in Piedmont. The press was raging with anticlericalism; antichristian laws were being carried; every kind of religious habit was looked askance at, and it must be acknowledged that it sometimes did but little to deserve respect; carefully fostered popular prejudices attached an odious sense to such words as novitiate, profession, vows and congregation. There was absolutely nothing to attract vocations to the priesthood, still less to the cloister or any kind of religious life. All round Don Bosco were nothing but failures, but in himself there was the fresh beginning of a hidden life.

The first seeds of this future harvest were sown by him in the hearts of his Sons with the greatest prudence. An infelicitous word, too open an allusion, or the full revelation of his plan at the outset, would have sufficed to give a fatal shock to the goodwill of those about him. First of all, he asked of them one thing only: to agree to help him. That was all. His simple Sunday evening conferences dealt indeed with Christian and religious virtues, but in describing their charm to encourage their practice, he aimed only at forming around him a body of devoted co-workers. It was the same method as that followed by Our Lord in the case of the Apostles, a method of progressive revelation, only bringing out the essence of his teaching by degrees in the measures in which it could be received and understood.

For many years, so far as circumstances gave time for it, on Sunday evenings, after prayers, St. John Bosco pursued this work of gradual training. His first followers grew up; Rua had put on the soutane, on October 3, 1852, with Rocchietti; others soon followed, Cagliero, Francesia, Bonetti: a small staff was gathered round the commander; from month to month the nucleus grew; Don Bosco's idea took shape, became plainer, and he adroitly fashioned the hearts of his disciples according to his ideal. In 1854, on January 26, during the novena of Francis de Sales, the young company received a name. All the soldiers enrolled in it were henceforth called Salesians. Here is the baptismal document, as we find it in Rua's notebook:

" On January 26, 1854, we met in Don Bosco's room. Besides Don Bosco, there were present: Cagliero, Rocchietti, Artiglia and Rua. It was proposed that we should begin, with the Lord's help, a time for the exercise of practical charity towards our neighbour. At the end of that period we might bind ourselves with a promise, and later on this promise might be changed into a vow. From that evening the name of *Salesians* was given to all those who adopted this kind of apostolate."

Salesians, disciples of St. Francis de Sales, thus did Don Bosco wish them to name themselves. Why? For many reasons, none of which deserves to be overlooked.

First of all, this intention of putting all his efforts under the protection of the gentle Bishop of Geneva went a long way back. He had scarcely made a start with his Oratory in the playground of the Convitto Ecclesiastico when, in agreement with his friends Cafasso and Borel, he

already thought of placing it under the protection of the Bishop of Geneva.

This devotion to the future Doctor of the Church he shared with his benefactress, the Marchesa di Barolo, who, at his instigation, or at least encouraged by his zeal, had long thought of founding a Society of Priests under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales. For this purpose, at the foot of the staircase where dwelt the three chaplains of her Orphanage for Girls, the Fathers Borel, Pacchiotti and Bosco, she had hung up a painted medallion of the holy Bishop. Time has not treated it well, but the tablet on which it was framed is still to be seen.

Furthermore, it was a bad time for Catholic ideas; three great heresies were redoubling their efforts to lead souls astray: Liberalism, Protestantism and Jansenism, never hitherto radically extirpated. St. Francis de Sales, the man for all doctrinal controversies, the pattern for all courteous and learned apologists, the first writer of tracts, the tireless mission preacher, seemed to St. John Bosco to be the very man to inspire a society, which he meant from that very time to take as its special object the defence of Catholic Truth by word and pen, by sermon, lecture and press.

Lastly, and above all, in giving his Sons the name of the Bishop of Geneva, the most gentle of all his contemporaries, he wanted the Salesians to be permeated with the Saint's spirit of gentleness and patience and charity in all their works and ways. To draw men to oneself by kindness and sympathy and Christian joyousness, in order to lead them on, as it were, naturally to God: such was the great means of conversion used by the Apostle of Chablais. St. John Bosco came to appropriate his secret through reading his works and his life; and he desired his religious to gain their educational success by means of the same victorious kindness, and therefore he believed the best thing he could do was to set before them, as their patron, pattern and guide, the Saint whose name they were to bear hereafter.

Having taken this name, the young recruits were to begin their testing in the private novitiate. But the word was not mentioned, because it was still too despised. In fact, a year afterwards, in the evening of the Annunciation, March 25, 1855, in St. John Bosco's poor room, Michael Rua, then in his second year of philosophy, made his first yearly vows in the hands of his chief. The ceremony was a simple one: a priest

standing and listening; a cleric on his knees before a crucifix repeating a form of words; witness — none; not even a plain surplice just for this occasion, nothing whatever; and yet, between these four walls, something great was beginning, a religious Order was about to open its wings. It was the always humble beginning of a work in which God is best pleased.

Poor young Michael Rua, little did he then suspect, thinking as he did, that his triple vow only bound him to live with Don Bosco and help him in all things, what a notable part he was to play in the work of his Founder! Don Bosco had seen well ahead and prophesied rightly; this young cleric of sixteen was called by God to share along with him all the cares of the Oratory, of the Congregation, and of the future. " We will go halves in everything, little Michael," said Don Bosco. And thus it was to be. To overcome the world of hindrances that will thwart activities, to share his increasing responsibilities, to take his place when he was absent or ill, the Blessed Virgin, the Shepherdess of his flock, sent him this invaluable assistant. It is not saying too much to maintain that, without Don Rua, Don Bosco could never have realised all his designs. So fully did he understand the mind of his founder, so exactly did he reflect his spirit, that Don Bosco once uttered this praise of his disciple: " If God were to say to me: Your last hour is close at hand; choose your successor, and ask me to endow him with all the gifts and graces you think requisite; I should not know what to ask God for which is not already to be found in full in the soul of Don Rua."

After Michael Rua, at intervals of varying length, other promises were placed in Don Bosco's hands: today it was Cagliero, tomorrow Albera, later on Bonetti. The day was to come when all together would officially unite in doing homage to the Father of their youth by making their vows in public in the presence of witnesses with some ceremonial; but then, Don Bosco's recruits joined up one at a time. *Natura non facit saltus,* and Don Bosco followed her example; it was by successive stages and slow preliminaries, by deliberate and patient steps that the Founder advanced towards his objective. Time had nothing to do with it, he never tried to force the situation, and he was careful to take men as he found them, and was never daunted.

Later on, in 1875, when Rome's final approbation had been given, when he felt that the Salesian Congregation was established, he review-

ed the surely heroic but rather troubled years he had been through, and recalled the wretched beginnings, the poverty of the materials he had to use, the many defects of his first collaborators; and he thanked God for having been patient, that he had not tried to reform everything at one stroke, that he had treated his human materials as men.

Listen to this simple and candid confession which he made at the age of sixty: " Are there any of you who still remember their first days at the Oratory? How many things, little by little and insensibly, have gone on growing stronger and better! Then Don Bosco was all alone, or nearly so. He had to do everything: to be teaching by day, to be teaching at night, to be writing books, to be preaching, to superintend lessons, to go and beg for food. In the House, all was not ideal. There was more than one upset. There were squabbles among the clerics who could not agree as to how good was to be done; literary or theological disputes, sometimes carried to great lengths; ' rags ' during studies when the pupils were away. Several could not manage to get up in the morning, they were too fond of their beds; others did not go down to take their classes, and that without warning the Superior. They prayed when along with the boys, but never did any spiritual reading or meditation, as demanded by the masters of the spiritual life. I noticed all these irregularities; from time to time I gave a warning here or there, but most of the time I just let things be, for there was no sin against God. If I had tried to root out all these habits at one stroke, I should have had to send away all my boys and to shut up the House, because these clerics would never become adapted to that kind of life. And then, a wind of independence was blowing everywhere which made it difficult to exercise command. I say nothing of all the attractions which might have turned away more than one of these young fellows from me to the secular clergy, nor of the pressure of their relations, who wanted to see them settled preferably in their own diocese. With what prudence one had to work! I did my best not to be wanting in it, for I found so many good qualities in these young clerics; they were rather wild and yet hard workers, good-hearted, and so straight in their morals. I used to think: when the first fire of youth has died away, they will be invaluable helpers. And I was not mistaken. The best of the Salesians of today come from those earliest bands; but if I had then tried to set restraints upon their exuberance, they would have left me in the lurch. If I had pre-

sumed to get perfection, I should have achieved little or nothing. The Oratory might have counted fifty or a hundred pupils, but no more."

These restrictions set upon the exuberance of his first clerics — these were the Rules of the young Congregation which, besides the religious vows, were to form a bond of union between the soldiers and their Captain. He had long pondered over drawing them up: in 1855 he made his first sketch. To reduce them to writing he relied upon three sources: he had before him the Constitutions of various religious Orders, the Jesuits, the Rosminians, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and those of the Redemptorists; he sought counsel to right and to left from indisputably experienced men; but, above all, he relied upon memory. The Rules, as he afterwards told Pius IX, are merely the setting down on paper of twenty year's experience; they are the transcription of life into a code. In 1857 the Rules were completed.

Thus, nearly everything was ready by that date for the bold stroke. More than one authoritative voice was urging him to proceed.

" Yes, found a Congregation, dear Don Bosco," St. Joseph Cafasso, his confessor, counselled him, " if you want to establish your Oratory on a firm basis." His Archbishop, Mgr. Fransoni, in exile at Lyons, did not think otherwise: he urged him to go to Rome to consult Pius IX on this important question. Good Father Borel, the indefatigable right hand of the Servant of God, shared the same opinion. All of them insisted upon his thinking of how his work was to survive him. And we have seen how he thought of it himself; but to make him decide, if not to act, at any rate to begin without further delay, he needed the certainly unexpected advice of the very man who, in Italy, as Minister of Justice, had been associated with the first laws against the religious, and who, in 1855, as Minister of the Interior and President of the Council, was to drive them out of the Sardinian States, His Excellency Urban Rattazzi.

Rattazzi had long held Don Boco in very high esteem. It was he who, in 1855, had given the humble priest of Valdocco the astonishing authorisation to spend a whole day in the country, without an escort, with a hundred and fifty prisoners of Turin.

" My dear Don Bosco," he said to him one day in 1857, " I wish you could live long, yes, a very long time, to educate and teach all these poor children. But you are not immortal. What will become of your Oratory after you? Have you thought about that? "

And as Don Bosco was looking at him without making any reply:

" You ought," he continued, " to associate with yourself more intimately a few of your young fellows or of your clerical helpers in governing and teaching your young people at Valdocco; in handing on your methods and spirit, and finally in gathering them into an Association which will go on."

" Your Excellency," replied Don Bosco with a smile, " it is you who are speaking to me of a Congregation, whereas the Law . . ."

" Oh, the Law the Law," immediately replied the statesman; " well, I know it thoroughly, and I know its bearing. It is directly against goods of mortmain and against the old Orders living outside the scope of legislation. But give me an Association in which all the members retain their civil rights, submit to the laws of the State, pay their taxes personally, an Association of free citizens living together for some beneficent purpose, and I guarantee you that there is no regular settled Government which can interfere with you. On the contrary, if it is just, it will have to protect you in the same way as it protects other Associations, whether they be commercial, industrial or for mutual assistance. So you can settle your affairs in all security. You will have the support of the State and the King, for it will be a question of a humanitarian Institution in the front rank."

" Very well, your Excellency," said Don Bosco, " then I will think it over."

He did so to such effect that on the morning of February 2, 1858, accompanied by young Michael Rua, and provided with a letter of introduction to his Archbishop, he set out for Rome, carrying in his bag a copy of the future Rules of the Congregation. On March 9, he had his first audience with the Pope. Pius IX was extremely kind. He made the Turin apostle talk about all his enterprises, and was astonished at their marvellous growth.

" How many undertakings you have started, my good Father," exclaimed Pius IX. " But if you happen to die, what will become of them? "

Here was an offer of help; Don Bosco grasped it immediately.

" I have specially come to Rome, most Holy Holy Father," he replied, " to speak to you on this subject. I want Your Holiness to help me to found a Congregation adapted to the times in which we live."

And he briefly explained his views about the project.

" Draw up the Rules for your religious Society," answered Pius IX, who had listened to him with as much benevolence as attention, " and let them be compiled in this spirit. On the one hand, do not allow a Government imbued with these modern principles to embarrass your Congregation; and on the other, you do not want promises, but vows, of course simple vows, to keep the members united to their head. To be sure of your subjects, you must have that power at your command. Finally, the Rules of the Society — for I shall call it a Society rather than a Congregation — should be easy to keep; the religious should wear no distinctive habit; there should be nothing in their devotional practices to attract the notice of the public. In fine, try to make every one of your Salesians a true religious in the Church of God, and in the world a citizen in full possession of his civic rights. The problem is not an easy one to resolve; nevertheless study it, and then bring me the result of your reflections."

Twelve days later, on March 21, St. John Bosco, at a second audience, had the happiness of placing in the Holy Father's hands the manuscript of the Rules, modified in the direction of the advice he had given. This document marked the first of the official steps taken by Don Bosco to secure Rome's approbation of the Society and of its Rules. How many others he had to take, how many obstacles he had to overcome before he attained his end! One step, and that a great one, had, however, been taken; he had crossed the Rubicon, and he went back to Turin full of joy having broached the business. He did not foresee that it would drag on for sixteen years.

He was so far from foreseeing it that only a year afterwards he deliberately left behind him the stage of experiments and trials, and spoke no longer by secret hints. December 9, 1859, marks the beginning of an epoch in the history of the Salesian Congregation: St. John Bosco departs from his reserve and unfolds his plan. At the weekly meeting on Sunday evening he tells his young hearers, not without a thrill, that it was time to take a stand with regard to the idea which was so dear to his heart: the foundation of the Salesian Congregation. It already existed in germ; several of those who were listening to him belonged to it in spirit, others by more intimate promises; the Pope approved of and had given his blessing to this new form of life; a body of Rules had been

drawn up which all were practising freely; it now remained to be seen whether the Institution would emerge from the mystery in which it had hitherto been enveloped, and would take an official name and acknowledge its firmly fixed design, and reckon on its openly declared soldiers. " I leave you a week for reflection," said Don Bosco, as he ended. " Whoever does not turn up at next Sunday's meeting will thereby show that he does not wish to give his name to the Society."

Nine days later, on December 18, only two of those who had attended the previous meeting were missing. Thereupon the Superior Chapter of the new Congregation was elected, which, with Don Bosco as Superior General, counted as its Prefect Don Alasonatti, a priest of the diocese who had come to help Don Bosco, and as Spiritual Director the subdeacon Michael Rua, as Procurator the cleric Angelo Savio, and as Councillors the clerics Cagliero, Bonetti and Lazzero.

Six months passed by, and in June, 1860, probably in order to promote the examination of his Rules in Rome, St. John Bosco begged his Archbishop, who was at Lyons, for his counsel and corrections. The letter sent with the text to the Rules was signed by twenty-five novices of the Congregation. It was at the meeting that evening, and after having attached their signatures, that all these young people bound themselves by a solemn promise, which spoke much for their fervour and for their attachment to the Society: " If unfortunately, owing to the sadness of the times, we are forbidden to bind ourselves by vows, each one of us pledges himself, wherever he may find himself, even if his companions be scattered all over the world, if there are only two of them, or even if one be left alone, to work for the reconstruction of this Society and to keep its Rules as far as possible."

These young men appeared to be ripe for the decisive step, the taking of the first formal vows. But St. John Bosco did not think so, and for two years more he superintended the training of their souls in his own spirit and to his own likeness. He felt that he was working at the foundation stones, and as he wanted the building to defy both time and tempest he fashioned them slowly with love and care. At last, on Wednesday, May 14, 1862, he thought the moment had come to harvest all these impatient young wills for the service of God and of the young. In the humble little room which had seen their weekly meetings, the twenty-two first Salesians made their first public vows in the hands

of Don Bosco. They were thus bound for three years to their Father and Founder. Among them were Don Alasonatti, his first Procurator; Cagliero, who was afterwards to receive the Roman purple; Albera, the third Superior General; Francesia, Cerruti and Bonetti, who were to be given important charges in the Society. Don Rua read aloud the form of words which was repeated by all, sentence by sentence. Don Bosco, kneeling at the foot of the crucifix, expressed his feelings in words overflowing with gratitude. When the last religious profession had been uttered, the Founder addressed his sons in these touching and prophetic words:

" My children, we are living in very disturbed times, and it looks like madness to be founding a new religious Congregation at the very hour in which the world and hell are doing their worst to destroy those now in existence. But fear not. I am not relying upon probabilities, but upon certainties; God is blessing our endeavour and His will is that it shall go on. What has not been done to thwart our designs? What has it all amounted to? Nothing at all. That is indeed one reason for trusting in the future. But I have others, and yet sounder ones. The principal one is that we are seeking for nothing but the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Who knows but that Heaven wills to make use of this humble Congregation to achieve great things in the Church of God? Who knows but that, in twenty-five or thirty years' time, our little nucleus, with the Lord's blessing, will go out into the whole world and become an army of over a thousand religious? "

The prophecy was more than fulfilled in the event. In fact, from year to year, new recruits flowed in slowly but surely to increase the youthful army. In January, 1863, the Salesians numbered 39; in January, 1864, 61; in 1865, 80; in January, 1866, 90; in 1874, when the Decree of final approbation appeared, 320; in 1888, at Don Bosco's death, 768; in 1910, at Don Rua's, 3,996; and at the time in which these lines are being writen about 8,500 [1]. Fr. John Francesia, the last survivor of those first disciples, died in January, 1930, at the age of 92. He had lived to see Don Bosco's words more than realised.

The only thing now wanting to the young members was Rome's approbation. It kept them waiting. To rouse the attention of the Roman

1 At the time when this new edition of Fr. Auffray's book is being prepared, 1963, the Salesians have crossed the 22,000 mark. (Editor's Note).

Commissions who were charged with the examination of the Constitutions of new Societies, Don Bosco sent them a second written copy of the Rules in August, 1863. They answered him that, in order to obtain from higher authority the Laudatory Decree, or first approbation, he must get, in support of his request, a certain number of episcopal recommendations, and especially the *placet* of his own diocesan. So the Saint multiplied his efforts in applying to the episcopate of Piedmont, and it was not long before he received letters of recommendation from the Bishops of Acqui, Cuneo, Susa, Mondovì and Casale, and finally — though not without difficulty — the *placet* of the Vicar capitular of Turin, who had replaced the deceased Archbishop Mgr. Fransoni. On February 12, 1864, accompanied by these important papers, the Rules of the Society were again forwarded to Rome in the hands of a most reliable friend.

This time matters progressed rapidly. Six months later, on July 23, the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars issued the Laudatory Decree in favour of the young Congregation. It was not the final and complete approbation, but the first obligatory stage was over.

There was great joy in Turin about this mark of interest shown by competent authority. It is true that this flattering Decree was accompanied with a memorandum setting forth in thirteen articles the corrections suggested in the Rules submitted for Rome's consent. To nine of these corrections Don Bosco was ready to submit without objection; but he thought that four of them might do much harm to his Society. In fact, the matter in question was the Superior General's power to dispense from the triennial vows without having recourse to Rome; the power of granting letters dimissorial to candidates for Holy Orders; the dispensation from having recourse to Rome for contracting debts or disposing of property; and the permission to deal directly with the Bishop of the diocese only, and not with Rome, for the starting of new Houses.

Of these four articles, he was specially concerned about the second, for it was the only one that guaranteed him full freedom of action in governing. In fact, if on his own responsibility he could not present his religious for Holy Orders, by reason of their being members of his Society — *titulo mensae communis,* as the Canon Law puts — that meant that they would continue to be under the obedience of their

regular pastors, who might, according to the needs of the diocese, take them away from the Congregation when they thought good. Most of the Bishops — not all, unhappily — acted otherwise; but a new problem arose. After the Laudatory Decree given by Rome to the Congregation, many Bishops regarded the Salesian Society as a definitely established Congregation; and thus, at the time of the ordinations, they found themselves puzzled about the candidates presented by it. On what ground were they to be ordained? On the one hand, Don Bosco could not yet present them on his own responsibility; on the other, the Bishops, knowing nothing of these young priests, nor of their moral and intellectual life, could not of their own knowledge judge whether they were worthy of the Orders they were to confer. Ordinarily they referred the matter to Don Bosco, who signed a testimonial as to the fitness of the subject; but this procedure was scarcely canonical. In fine, as to a " Yes " or " No," the two authorities might be in conflict, and naturally Don Bosco could only bow to the decision of the Bishop.

Sometimes it cost him dear; as when at Turin, for instance, they insisted that all his clerics should follow the full course of the Seminary, the timetable of which did not at all correspond with that of the Oratory. What an upset in the running of the House! And what a waste of time it was, going four times a day to the town and back to attend the classes! It could not go on for long. The young religious were distracted between two worlds, that of the diocese and that of the Congregation, and under such unfavourable circumstances managed to lose their vocation. " Last year," wrote Don Bosco to Pius IX in 1868, " out of ten of my students of theology attending the Seminary lectures not one has remained in the Society." The trial was too great; and we shall see Don Bosco scheming for more than five years that his young candidates might escape it, by trying to get Rome to grant him the power of delivering letters dimissory to his religious.

In 1867 he was in the Eternal City for the second time. Three reasons had brought him there: the question of the letters, a delicate business to be arranged between the Italian Government and the Vatican, a business which we shall set forth at length in the next chapter, and his desire to make an appeal to Roman charity to finish the building of the church of Our Lady, Help of Christians, begun in 1865. As to the two last matters, his efforts were crowned with complete success; as

to the first, they were in vain. In the Congregation of the Bishops and Regulars, he encountered a will determined to refuse him the privilege he was asking for. At that time, there was a very strong current running in Rome in favour of extending episcopal jurisdiction over the religious Congregations; and, furthermore, among the subjects to be submitted to the Vatican Council was one which aimed at a regrouping of the Congregations, the fusion into one of those having ends, which, if not identical, were at least very similar. Hence the atmosphere of Rome was not favourable to Don Bosco's dearest desire; and he returned to Turin sad at heart, but by no means discouraged.

His young Congregation was not only progressing in numbers, but it was also growing in age and in wisdom before God and man. In 1862, it was by triennial vows that Don Bosco had bound his first disciples to God and to the Society; in 1865, at the end of his last trial, as he had obtained the Laudatory Decree, he felt that he was authorised tc grant perpetual vows to his best subjects. On November 10, it was Father Lemoyne, the Founder's future historian, who pronounced his first perpetual vows: on the 15th, it was Don Rua, Don Cagliero, Don Francesia, Don Bonetti, Don Ghivarello and two lay brothers, Gaia and Rossi; on December 6, it was a last group, including clerics and laymen. On that side, the wind seemed to be filling to the full the sails of the frail craft of the new Congregation.

But elsewhere, and not far off, the storm was growling. Before he had left Rome they had said to Don Bosco: " You are going to have a new Archbishop, Mgr. Riccardi di Netro, the Bishop of Savona; try to come to an understanding with him about this business of the letters dimissory; that will make things much easier." Mgr. Riccardi di Netro was a Turin man and an old friend of Don Bosco. On his way through Rome, during St. John Bosco's last stay there, he had called upon him, and told him of his firm determination to entrust him with the charge of the minor seminaries of Giaveno and Bra, and of the Seminary of Chieri. Thus Don Bosco regained Turin with the conviction that his new pastor would be protector and father to his Society. A second gracious visit paid him one evening by the Archbishop, even before taking possession of the see, confirmed the Servant of God in his conclusion. Unfortunately, the Saint was not at home that evening; early next day he was at the Archbishop's House, thanking him warmly for

his kindly courtesy. And they chatted together. During the conversation, Don Bosco came to begging his pastor's support for his Society.

" What, Don Bosco, have you indeed founded a religious Congregation? "

" Well, yes, my Lord."

And then Don Bosco began telling him in detail of all the troubles he had been through to get his Congregation started. The Archbishop now listened with indifference, if not with hostility. It was a great disappointment: he had counted upon Don Bosco and his helpers to assist him in furthering in the good work of his diocese, particularly in work for the young, and now Don Bosco was talking to him of a Society called to a world wide mission, and was begging him to exempt his new Congregation from any immediate dependence upon the Ordinary. His audacity was grand. The two men left one another with a few commonplace remarks, which scarcely concealed the coolness which was henceforward to be characteristic of the relations between the Archbishop and the great educator.

Unfortunately, this feeling soon betrayed itself in action. One day in September, 1867, Don Bosco received a curt and very dry note from the Archbishop forbidding him to use, for the needs of his Oratory, clergy born in the archdiocese, and giving him notice that henceforward he would confer Holy Orders only on seminarists who were living at the Seminary. It was a mortal blow to the progress of this House. Don Bosco made several attempts to get the Archbishop to revoke his decision.

" Come, your Grace," he said to him, " do you want to kill my Oratory outright? my clerics at the Seminary, my young priests at the Convitto Ecclesiastico? Then whom shall I have to look after my boys? I shall be quite alone, and without any assistants."

" I can do nothing about it, my dear Don Bosco; it is just in the interest of the studies of these young clerics that I have to take this course."

" Then I suggest, your Grace, that the case be taken to Rome. The Holy Father will decide."

" No, no; this is a little quarrel between us two; we must thrash it out between ourselves."

A little quarrel! It was to last for years and years, to go on from one pontificate to another, and painfully to wound the heart of Don Bosco before being settled in accordance with his desire. Three months afterwards, it broke forth violently again with regard to the coming ordination of a young Salesian religious born in the archdiocese, Father Albera. This time Don Bosco deputed Don Cagliero to try to get the Archbishop to give way.

" This ordination is impossible," declared the Archbishop.

" But why, your Grace? "

" Because the cleric Albera is my subject."

" But he also belongs to the Salesian Congregation."

" What Salesian Congregation? I know nothing of it, I only know that this cleric comes from None, and that None is in my diocese."

" Your Grace knows well that Rome issued a Laudatory Decree in the beginning of 1864, which is now in the archives of the archbishopric."

" Then, what ought I to do? "

" See whether Don Bosco is doing right or wrong. If he does wrong, counter his action."

" Well, I want to have my clergy at the Seminary."

" Then, you want to sign the death warrant of the Oratory."

" By no means; not all your teachers and superintendents are from Turin."

" But, your Grace, how can the other Bishops fail to imitate the action of their metropolitan, when they come to know it? "

This misunderstanding between two authorities who should have worked together hand in hand for the good of souls led to unfortunate effects at Valdocco. The clerics who had no intention of binding themselves to the Society, and the weaker-willed ones upon whom, from without, relations, friends or members of the clergy steadily worked to detach them from Don Bosco, went into the Seminary. The rest remained faithful to him, but with uneasy feelings which can be very easily understood. Indeed, poor Don Bosco was being badly paid out for having, only in 1850, taken under his roof all the seminarists of the Seminary at Turin who, after its closing down by the Archbishop, could find no shelter for their much-tried vocation either in their own families or in any other suitable place.

And while there was an outcry against independence at Turin, they were crying out against novelty at Rome. In vain did Don Bosco send the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars an imposing pile of episcopal recommendations, among which were to be found those of the Cardinal Archbishops of Pisa, Ancona and Fermo, those of the Archbishop of Lucca and Genoa, of the Bishop of Alessandria, Novara, Susa, Mondovì, Saluzzo, Albenga, Guastalla, Reggio Emilia, Asti, Parma, Alba and Aosta; despite all this, the General Secretary of the said Congregation, Mgr. Svegliati, persisted in thinking that the Holy See should further delay its approbation. There were too few of the religious, the Rules were too simple, the vow of poverty could not possibly be reconciled with the rights of property of the subject, the studies were too scamped — a point in the Rule that could not be allowed — the direction of the Seminaries regarded as possible, Don Bosco's obstinacy in accepting only nine of the thirteen corrections suggested by the Congregation of Regulars in the Constitutions of his Socitey: the excellent Secretary had a hundred good reasons for his unfavourable opinion. And this opinion was shared by the Congregation itself, and notified to Don Bosco by Mgr. Svegliati in a letter dated October 2, 1868. Don Bosco then saw that, unless he went to Rome himself, to interest Pius IX in his cause, the business would drag on, God alone knew how long. Therefore, on January 8, 1869, he started alone for the Eternal City, carrying with him in his bag for the third time the book of the Rules slightly touched up.

On all sides he was advised not to take this step: "Come Don Bosco, at present there is nothing to be done in Rome; the state of people's minds there is not favourable to you, and even from Piedmont, you know what reports about yourself, your Oratory and your Society, have preceded you. Moreover, Rome will not take a side on the eve of the Vatican Council; the problem you want it to settle in your favour is one of those which has to be submitted to the Fathers of the Council. So you had better wait. Time is a great doctor." These voices of human prudence were disregarded by the Servant of God: a power, as mysterious as it was irresistible, urged him to go. Everything was conspiring against him, both men and circumstances. But for the triumph of his cause he counted upon Our Lady, Help of Christians, in whose honour he had just built a splendid church, and upon Pius IX, whose benevolence had never failed him. His confidence did not mislead him.

As soon as he arrived in Rome he started on his campaign.

On taking his first soundings, the fears of his Turin friends seemed to be confirmed: " Hardly had I explored the situation," he writes, " when I ascertained that very few prelates showed themselves in favour of my projects. Nearly all of them manifested coldness, or at any rate some doubt as to the result of my procedure. Above all, I felt I had the highest personages in the Church against me." What was to be done? To convert these adverse wills, there was only one thing to do; to pray for a direct intervention of Heaven in his favour. An opportunity at last occurred.

One of his most decided opponents, Cardinal Berardi, just then had a nephew of eleven who was at death's door through an attack of typhoid. He was an only son, heir to a magnificent fortune, and his parents were in great dread of losing him. Begged by his uncle and employed by his father to visit the dying boy, Don Bosco appeared to have forgotten their request, when he called one night at Berardi House. Welcomed with delight by the whole family, he was at once taken to the dying child.

" Don Bosco, cure him for us," begged both his father and mother.

" Have confidence in Our Lady, Help of Christians," answered the Servant of God, " and let us all begin a novena together in her honour."

And thereupon he recited the first prayers of the novena; then he blessed the boy and withdrew. Astonishing to relate, no sooner had he left the house than the fever left the patient. Three days after, Don Bosco called in again: the boy was sitting up in bed, talking and playing, and quite lively; he was out of danger and was becoming convalescent. The Blessed Virgin had not done things by halves. The parents of the sick child knew not how to express their gratitude to Don Bosco; and the good Cardinal overwhelmed him with thanks.

" What can I do to serve you, Don Bosco? Tell me. I should so much like to help you after this signal blessing."

" I only ask your Eminence for one thing. Use your great credit with the Holy Father to get my humble Congregation approved of."

" You can reckon on my support," promised the Cardinal, and he kept his word.

For one opponent disarmed, how many remained to be overcome! " If I can win over the Cardinal Secretary of State," thought Don Bosco,

" his influence will go far in promoting my business." And at once he called upon Cardinal Antonelli, whom he found entirely helpless with an attack of gout.

" Your Eminence, I have come to ask your support in obtaining the approbation of my Society."

"But, my poor Don Bosco, you see what a state I am in. I can't leave my room."

" Allow me, your Eminence, to urge my suit nevertheless; I beg you to go to the Holy Father and speak for us."

" Certainly, gladly as soon as I can manage to move."

" Tomorrow then, your Eminence? "

" Tomorrow! Do you mean that? "

" Mean it! Come, trust in Our Lady, Help of Christians, and tomorrow you will be quite well and able to go to the Holy Father."

As a matter of fact, next morning Cardinal Antonelli felt remarkably better; the sharp pains had disappeared; he could walk; the crisis seemed to be over. There is no need to say that he could do nothing before he had been to tell Pius IX of his cure and of the price he had paid for it.

Interested in these two wonderful occurrences, the good Pope summoned Don Bosco to come and see him a few days later, and talked to him for an hour and a half about the business that had brought him to Rome. He promised him his certain support, and assured him that everything would be settled in the end very nearly as he desired. " But you should win over Mgr. Svegliati to your cause," counselled Pius IX; " he is your most formidable opponent. Convert him, and your game is won."

A few hours later, Don Bosco was in the antechamber of the Secretary of the Congregation of the Bishops and Regulars. Introduced into Mgr. Svegliati's presence, he found him lying on a sofa, suffering from a violent attack of influenza.

" How unlucky a time to call! " he said. " I came, Monsignor, to ask you to help me to smooth away all the difficulties in the way of granting an approbation of the Salesian Society."

" Smoothing away difficulties is not as easy as all that, Don Bosco! Besides, you see in what a state I am."

" And yet, Monsignor, I have the greatest need of your going to

see the Holy Father, who seems to be well disposed towards us."

"But how can it be done, my poor Don Bosco?"

"How? How, do you say? Well; I will tell you. Commend your health to the care of Our Lady, Help of Christians, and promise her that you will take an interest in the Salesian Congregation, and you will see that she will soon set you on your feet again."

"It is easy for you to say so."

"Try, Monsignor, and you will see. Have faith in Our Lady, Help of Christians."

"Well, Don Bosco, if tomorrow, contrary to all expectation, I can present myself at the Holy Father's audience, I assure you that I will speak in your favour at it."

Next morning the dreadful cough had disappeared, and the fever along with it; Monsignor Svegliati went to the Holy Father, and after the audience called on Don Bosco to promise his support when the discussion came on which was to settle the question in despute.

It took place on February 19. On that day, at Turin, in the church of Our Lady, Help of Christians, all the boys of the Oratory knelt in turns hour after hour at the feet of the Blessed Sacrament to win from Heaven the desired blessing. Their fervent prayers were victorious. On February 19, the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars discussed the burning question for the last time, and concluded in accordance with the desires of Don Bosco. On March 1, 1869, the Prefect of the Congregation issued a Decree which approved of the Salesian Congregation, and granted its Head for ten years the right to have ordained, on the sole ground of membership of the Society, those of them who had entered it before they were fourteen. The final approbation of the Rules was deferred until later.

As soon as Don Bosco had this brief of approbation in his pocket, he set off for Turin, where he arrived in the evening of March 5. There is no need to speak of the welcome given him by his boys and especially by his religious. It was not yet the end of all his troubles, but it was the dawn of victory; and all Don Bosco's true friends rejoiced with him. But no one more than good Father Borel. He was in bed, laid up with a relentless illness, when he heard of the return of his friend. Then, they could not keep him back; despite the counsels of those around him, he got up and dressed to hear the news. Leaning on a stick with

one hand, feeling his way along the walls of Cottolengo Street with the other, he dragged his fever-stricken body as far as the Oratory, and reached it just when Don Bosco, with one foot on the staircase, was going up to his room.

" Oh, Don Bosco! " he cried, as he stagered on his trembling limbs.

" Dear Father Borel, how good of you to have come like this! "

" Is the Congregation now approved? "

" Yes, indeed, and finally."

" *Deo gratias!* Now I shall die happy," he exclaimed, with a sob in his voice; and turning on his heels, he went back to bed.

With this official approbation of the Society, Don Bosco was not at the end of his troubles; far from it. He had to obtain the approbation of the Constitutions, and an unrestricted right to deliver the famous letters dimissory. More than forty Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops had testified at Rome that the Salesian Congregation seemed to them to be built upon solid foundations; but, unfortunately, the one whose testimony ought to have had most weight, the new Archbishop of Turin, Mgr. Gastaldi, the former Bishop of Saluzzo, never ceased seeking quarrels with Don Bosco and his Institute. The old accusations, repeated and refuted a hundred times, were revived and discussed again: " In Don Boco's House disorder ruled; the studies of the clerics were only summary; the professors of theology had insufficient learning; the novitiate could hardly be said to exist; the practices of piety did not amount to much; the ascetic training of the young Salesians was incomplete; the young candidates having to carry on their own studies, their employment as teachers and often their exercises as novices inevitably injured one or the other of these duties." When formulated by the Ordinary, such grievances could not fail to impress the Roman judges unfavourably.

To do away with such complaints, the Saint undertook two fresh journeys to Rome, one in 1871, the other in 1873; he introduced, according to the requirements of the Congregation of Bishops Regulars, two new chapters into his Rules, one on Studies and another on the Novitiate; and lastly, in 1874, he had a booklet of twenty pages printed in Rome, which replied to the gravest of the objections made against his religious family, and set forth his reasons for insisting upon the approbation of the Rules, and the unrestricted grant of letters dimissory. This memorandum was distributed among the Cardinals of the Curia

and among all the influential members of the Roman Congregations. At his farewell audience in 1869, after the approbation of the Society, Pius IX had said to him: " One step at a time, one step at a time! *Chi va piano, va sano.* When any affair is going on well, the Holy See usually makes additions, it never subtracts." Don Bosco remembered that word of encouragement; once more he counted on the friendship of Pius IX to give his cause an impetus at the proper moment.

In this world, his confidence could not have been better placed.

In heaven, it was given to Our Lady, Help of Christians, whose assistance he urged all his people to solicit. A circular, sent from Rome on March 16, enjoined upon all his religious a triduum of fasting, on all his boys a triduum of prayer from March 21 to 23. This triduum of prayer was again asked of all on the 26th, 27th and 28th of the same month. The first meeting of the four Cardinals, called upon to decide, was held on the 29th, and appeared to be of good augury; the second and last was held on the 31st, and lasted three hours and a half. Three of the Cardinals supported the final approbation of the Rules, and all four were in favour of a temporal approbation *ad experimentum.* On April 3, which that year fell on Good Friday, Mgr. Vitelleschi, the Secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, referred the matter to the Holy Father. When Pope Pius IX had heard the report of the meeting, he exclaimed " So they want one more vote for the final approbation: very well, I will give mine."

That evening, Don Bosco, in his impatience to ascertain the final result, went to Vitelleschi House. The Secretary had only just come in.

" Light up the lamps for an illumination, Don Bosco," he cried, as soon as he saw him from the distance. " Your rules are finally approved, and for ten years [1] you will have the right to deliver letters dimissory unconditionally." Don Bosco never lost an opportunity for a witty remark or an agreeable gesture, and taking a caramel from his pocket and offering it: " Here, Monsignor," he said, " you have earned it."

And he had earned this noble reward of sixteen years of struggles and anxieties, of toils and secret sorrows: his beloved daughter, the Salesian Congregation, triumphing over the last obstructions, could now

1 In 1884, this right was granted without any restriction.

go forward alone, under the eyes and the control of Rome. Henceforward his Institute was sure to last.

Someone writes: " To found a Congregation, two things are required: the grace of blindness to hindrances, and money." This saying finds an echo in these words of St. John Bosco: " If, knowing what I now know, I had to start anew all the work that the foundation of the Society cost me, and to endure all the toil it entailed upon me, I don't know if I should have the courage to do it."

And nevertheless, two years earlier, in 1872, he had laid the foundation of a second Congregation: one of women, whom he wished to become the teachers of young girls, especially those of the poorer and working classes.

By temperament he felt nothing but repugnance for this fresh initiative. The extreme delicacy and exquisite chastity of his soul, a heart lovely with a candour of purity which he jealously conserved to the end of his days, and then — one must add — his instinctive distaste for everything that in any way overemphasised the world of women: all these strove to turn his attention from such work. He needed serious reasons to induce him to undertake it. And they were not wanting.

Notable laymen and Bishops, who were among the apostle's friends, had long been bringing pressure to bear upon him to inaugurate on behalf of girls what he had done for youths. They argued rightly when they said to Don Bosco, in emphasising the dangers which young girls were beginning to incur: " Why should not this kind of work and this system of education also be provided for the young of the other sex? The fact of their belonging to that sex surely should not deprive these children of the benefit of such Christian education." Re-echoing these earthly voices, the voice of Heaven seems also to have spoken in some way to Don Bosco. Indeed, in 1866, he mentioned to the future Cardinal Cagliero and to Father Lemyone his desire of founding a Congregation of women with simple vows, entrusted with bringing up poor young girls. In 1870, he expressed the same idea to one of his first Sons, Father Francesia. In 1871, during his fourth visit to Rome, he solicited the counsel of Pius IX. He could not have done more wisely. The Pope replied: " Your proposal must, I think, bring glory to God and save many souls. In my opinion, these future religious women should be the counterpart to the Salesians. They will do for young girls what the

Salesians are doing for boys; and, from the spiritual point of view, they will depend upon you and your successors, as the Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul depend upon the Lazarists."

Thus God's will was plain.

He had only to wait until the ripe fruit was ready to drop from the tree. Ten years before, in 1867, when returning from Acqui to Turin by way of Alessandria, Don Bosco had met, in a third class carriage, the priest of a village named Mornese in the same diocese. He was Don Pestarino, a man of apostolic spirit. In his parish and with his approbation, there had arisen, in 1856, an association of young girls called The Pious Union of the Children of Mary Immaculate. Its object was to gather together in one spirit and under one Rule, for all parochial works, all those young girls who were not attracted to married life, and yet felt no vocation to become nuns. They were religious in the world, as they had said. In the sixteenth century St. Angela de Merici had already founded a similar Society, and adjunct to her Order of teachers, the laywomen Ursulines, leading in their own families, under the authority of local Superiors, a life of hidden devotion and self-sacrifice.

From this company of pious Christian women a branch had broken away one day in 1861. A young countrywoman, named Mary Mazzarello, who was recovering from a fever taken at the bedside of the sick, betook herself one evening to the church, where the good rector of Mornese was gathering his flock for the recitation of the rosary and the reading of a passage of *The Devout Life.* She was thinking of a new outlet for her zeal, when she met her friend Petronilla on the threshold.

" I can't go on working in the vineyards," said Mary. " But you are free. If you like, we could take some lessons at the village tailor. Later, it would become a means of doing good to the children. We could teach them to work and, at the same time, to love and serve God."

Petronilla readily agreed.

" Then," added Mary, " let it be our intention, that each stitch, from tonight onwards, shall be an act of love for God; and let us go into the church to ask for His enlightenment and assistance."

Next day they began their apprenticeship.

At the end of the year, the two girls had learnt enough to work on their own account. Other friends joined them. They were entrusted with children to look after, and with others to teach. For greater convenience,

St. Dominic Savio pupil of St. John Bosco. Aged 15 when he died.

they soon ate, prayed and lived together in a house close to the church, formerly built by Don Pestarino, who thought it might perhaps do some day for the meeting of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. There were seven of them in the little company gathered around Mary Mazzarello. Mary, the eldest, was twenty-four, the two youngest were fourteen. They would have been very much astonished had anyone told them that from their little association, in ten years' time, would arise a Congregation of women destined to spread all over the world.

Don Bosco, however, went on letting his idea slowly ripen by keeping always in touch with this humble community, about which he held very decided views. On several occasions, in 1864, 1867, 1869 and 1870, the Servant of God, led to Mornese by other missionary interests, did not fail to call upon the devout young women whose number had now increased to fifteen. Lastly, in May, 1871, he suddenly decided to make an important communication to his assembled Chapter. It ran substantially as follows: " Those who are well authorised to speak have been counselling me to do for girls what, by the grace of God, we are already accomplishing for boys. If I were to listen to my own inclinations, I should not strike out in that direction; but these good friends are so pressing, that I should feel I was shrinking from following the designs of Providence if I did not take their counsels into consideration. Let us then reflect upon this undertaking as in the Lord's presence; let us ask ourselves what His glory and the salvation of souls require. During the whole of this month, let all our prayers, both public and private, have no other object than this: to get God to enlighten us in making our decision in this matter."

A month later the assembled chapter unanimously decided to create this second army which, alongside of the first, was to bring to young women the benefit of Salesian education. In consequence of a serious illness which nearly carried off Don Bosco at the end of that year, the project underwent some delay. But, no sooner had he escaped this danger, than he called Don Pestarino to his bedside, while he was convalescent, and begged him to proceed to the election of a Superior for the little community of Mornese. This interview took place on January 6, 1872, the feast of the Epiphany; on the 29th, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, the future religious, who now numbered twenty-seven, as-

sembled to vote. On the first ballot, Mary Mazzarello was elected by twenty-one votes.

To give the new community an altogether religious character, the Sisters had only to be clothed with the habit and christened with a name. It was on August 5, the feast of Our Lady of the Snow, that after a week's retreat the Bishop of Acqui proceeded, in the presence of Don Bosco, to the clothing of the new nuns. Fourteen of them took the habit, and eleven of these pronounced their triennial vows. Mary Mazzarello was then thirty-five. To the humble Society that was born that day, the Saint gave the name which he had long borne in his heart: " You will be called ' The Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians,' " he told them. In his mind this name was to perpetuate for all time his gratitude to Mary under his favourite title for her — The Help of Christians — who under that name had crowned with blessings his Oratory, his toils and his Sons.

A few days afterwards, when installing his Daughters in a new house at the far end of the village, Don Bosco said to them: " You will have pupils, and so many that you will not know where to put them. You are now only a few, and how poor! But be of good courage, be true to the Rule which I have laid down for you, and your increase in numbers will be prodigious. Through you, the Blessed Virgin desires to come to the assistance of the young girls of the people." This prediction was to be fulfilled to the letter.

At Mornese they remained nine years. It was a time of suffering. The people viewed with disdain the beginning of a religious order in such poverty, and with such poor, uninfluential subjects. Mary Mazzarello had been appointed Superior. What good could come from such an unknown and humble beginning? The benediction of God always rests on the humble and persecuted. One might say almost in the twinkling of an eye, the religious community increased to seventy members. Demands for foundations rained upon them, and the hive began to swarm, so that new foundations were made at Turin, Chieri, Biella and also at Nizza-Monferrato. The latter is a large provincial town of Monferrato surrounded by a district rich in vines, being especially famous for *Barbera.* Since 1880 it has become still more famous, by reason of its being the Headquarters of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and it has become the hub of the religious world for these good sisters.

They have established a flourishing school, a girls' workshop, a novitiate and several minor works. The astonishing development of the Sisters is not limited to Nizza-Monferrato. New centres of their work have been established in all the great capitals and towns of many countries of Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia.

Recently the Holy Father, Pius XI, addressed a letter to the Superior General of the Salesians, in which, after outlining their various charitable activities, he says: " We do not see any form of apostolate which these Sisters have not initiated during this last half century."

Our Blessed Lord has magnificently blessed their enterprising and untiring zeal. Let us recall the road through which they have passed in these fifty years of Salesian apostolate for girls.

They were fifteen on August 5, 1872, when they took the religious habit. Now they are actually more than 17,000 professed Sisters.

Then their existence was hidden in an unknown village of Piedmont. Now they have Houses in the five Continents.

Then they had only one little House. Now they have about one thousand and three hundred Houses.

Those first religious were the humble children of the fields, almost illiterate. Now it is not an uncommon sight to see them taking the first places in the Government Schools, and it is not rare to see them among the most successful in the University Halls.

Success has not turned their heads. They are still as humble, modest, gay, playful, endearing and simple as in the days of Mother Mary Mazzarello. They remain still the children of Don Bosco, and are filled with that joyful spirit that pervades the work of their Holy Founder. Their methods of education are the same as those of the Salesian: joy, confidence, saintly liberty, familiarity with superiors, real and expressed tenderness, family spirit, conquering kindness, motherly care.

To help his twofold army of teachers in their enterprises, the Saint completed his religious family by founding, in 1876, a very modern Third Order: The Union of Salesian Co-operators. Without knowing it, he was copying the Founders of the great Orders, such as St. Francis and St. Dominic, whose vigorous trees, rooted in the soil of the Church, usually had three branches.

But the new plantation differed from its models. This organization of men of goodwill and zeal was not called a third order, nor a confra-

ternity, words formerly dear to devout Christians, but today likely to keep some people at a distance; and it aimed at the moral salvation of the children of the people, even more and more betrayed as they were by society, by the school and by the family.

How did the Saint come to complete his other two organizations with a third? In this way.

The assertion, which is so false in biology: " the need creates the organ," is often true in the apostolate. The Union of Salesian Co-operators was born of a need, of the need of helpers, which the Founder of the Oratories experienced. Remember the facts.

Don Bosco opened his first Oratory at Turin. He had the gift of attraction, because his heart was burning with the charity of Christ; and, on the other hand, hundreds of lost sheep in that great town were too happy to have at last found a shepherd: from this reciprocal sympathy sprang a family of from five to six hundred children, who took possession of the whole of the life of the Servant of God. Being overwhelmed, he called for help. Good priests ran to the rescue, Father Borel, St. Joseph Cafasso, Father Picco and others. But this help was inadequate, for the Oratory was assuming unexpected proportions. Then Don Bosco turned to the laity, to the principal Catholics of Turin, and said to them: " Will not you, too, come to my assistance? See, there is no want of work. There is enough for all tastes and for all talents. You are God's spoilt children; your spare time, your education, your many capacities, your zeal, your wealth, won't you, by way of gratitude, give them to the Lord in the persons of these poor unfortunates? " This call was understood, and from every rank of society there ran to Don Bosco invaluable helpers, who came to teach the catechism to his little boys.

They did not do that only. They lent themselves to a hundred urgent tasks: evening lessons, superintendence in the chapel, preparation for first Communion, looking out for jobs for the unemployed, visiting the apprentices in the workyards, rehearsals at the theatre, gathering together the slack and the abandoned ones on Sunday mornings for the services — and who can say what else?

There was some merit in men of the world offering such service: the district in which they came to work was outside the town, one of the most ill-famed, and full of ruts and quagmires; the customers were . . . well, what they were, certainly interesting, but so squalid, so

ragged, so illiterate! Lastly, their services were requisitioned not only on Sundays, but several times a week, and even, if it were a question of evening classes or of the catechism, every day.

On parallel lines, from another side of the Oratory's needs, their mothers, their wives and sisters co-operated with them in the same work, in the simplest and commonest, as well as in the most practical ways. Many of the boys could not get work, because they just exuded their wretchedness. What should have made them welcome created repulsion: their filthy linen, if they had any, their garments full of holes, their shoes down at heel, their mops of hair, untrimmed for six months and well inhabited, their look of utter denudation. Then these ladies, assembled at Don Bosco's or at one of their own homes, made shirts, mended trousers, patched up clothes or bought new ones, taught them how to wash their faces and to comb their hair, until the boys were to be transformed and unrecognisable as to be able to find a kindly employer.

We find on record the names of some of these admirable women who, along with Don Bosco's mother, clothed the naked, while their husbands, sons or brothers were staunching the thirst of those longed for the truth: Signora Gastaldi and her daughter, the mother and sister of a future Archbishop of Turin, Signora Rua, the mother of Don Bosco's first successor, and the Marchesa Fassati.

Did any of these people, men or women, suspect that they were at the fountainhead of a great river, or that they were themselves its source, and that its bed would deepen and its course grow wider and wider as years passed by? It seems unlikely. They excercised charity simply and with all their hearts; they served God in His suffering members and never looked beyond.

But he who had set their self-sacrifice in motion saw farther ahead. With his profound and steady insight he already discerned extending at intervals alongside of his two religious Societies this army of indispensable auxiliaries, the nucleus of which was there beneath his eyes, mending socks or drilling children in the alphabet.

Indeed, the apostle had the spirit of a forerunner. From the beginning of 1841 — and do not forget that this is only eight years after the foundation of the first Conference of St. Vincent de Paul — he foresaw the important role that the new circumstances of the apostolate

would create for the laity in modern society. And already, for his part, he was organising it.

It is a fact that machinery — and pleasures, too — have drawn crowds of working men into the towns. Verhaeren has well christened these modern cities " tentaculars," attracting and sucking up innumerable multitudes to themselves. Industrial towns are rapidly overpopulated; parishes double and treble and quintuple their spiritual flocks, and the labourers of salvation do not increase in proportion. The clergy are overwhelmed and must appeal to the laity for that part of their work which can be handed over to them.

There are other portions in which, naturally and from the fact of his competence therein, the layman is on his own ground. His work, as teacher or trainer, as stage manager or lecturer, as administrator or conductor, under the priest's control, is then invaluable and has its right place in the service of souls.

Lastly, there are quarters which the priest cannot reach, because his garb is not welcomed in them.

Here are three reasons for making room today, and they will make room more and more in our Catholic organisations, for the valued assistance of devout lay folk.

Of course such co-operation must be a delicate business. Dangerous reefs are to be suspected, and even perceived. On the one hand, much tact and dexterity are needed, for such people are helpers, and kindly collaborators, who are often indispensable, but they are not servants. On the other hand, they may be inclined perhaps to encroach upon and to curtail the special role of the priest, and to relegate him gently to the sacristy. There are dangers of domination on one side, and of laicisation on the other: these are undeniable. St. John Bosco contrived to avoid them in both directions. With what skill did he manage to capture the precious treasure of lay devotion! His regulations for the Co-operators were a marvel of wisdom and ingenuity, for they provide a tactful solution of a twofold and delicate problem.

On the one hand, they bind all the zealous laity to their head by the gentle bonds of devotion, of spiritual blessings, and of the monthly information given by the *Salesian Bulletin,* the last and most important of Don Bosco's press productions; and on the other he assigns to this army, scattered all over the world, a task which is very definite, although

general: to give themselves up to the service of the poor and abandoned young for their improvement, with the same methods as those used by St. Francis de Sales.

This assistance, which is brought to the Salesians by the Co-operators, is as diverse as are their means. Some will support them warmly with their prayers, others will help with their alms; these will place at their service all the influence they possess, those will put themselves, with their talents, small or great, at the disposition of the Salesians. At a time when the young are more than ever the stake contended for by all parties, this new organisation is plainly most opportune and easily adapted to enlist all temperaments and all degrees. It appeals as much for the alms of the sufferings of the paralysed and of the nightly prayers of the protecting Carmel as for the generosity of the wealthy or for the active assistance of those who have any time to spare.

This very up-to-date third order, Don Bosco was firmly determined to incorporate into his religious family. In his mind, it was to become an integral part of the Salesian Congregation. In his book of Constitutions, a special chapter — *Of the External Members of the Society* — was devoted to it. In 1874, on the eve of the approbation of the Rule, Rome required the suppression of this chapter; but the Salesian Co-operators nevertheless continue to be regarded as belonging to the family whose privileges, merits and anxieties they share.

A God-given idea, this Union has gone on growing for fifty years, since its approbation by Rome in 1876, with startling rapidity. There are now nearly four hundred thousand Co-operators in the four quarters of the world, contributing, as Pius XI said, to the success of all the enterprises undertaken by the Salesians for the Christian education of the young. Every year their ranks are still increasing with the needs of the apostolate. The necessity for creating the instrument still continues as in the days of Don Bosco's first and famous Oratory.

Hitherto we have spoken but incidentally of the Constitutions that govern the inner life of these three Societies. We have intentionally said nothing of their contents so as not to cumber our subject. But now, in honour of this religious discipline, we feel bound to show that this great tree, with its three branches, overshadowing more than two hundred Catholic dioceses, has already borne its fruit. Eight Causes for Canonisation, now before the Roman tribunals, five belonging to the Salesian

Congregation, two to the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, and one to the Co-operators, testify to the sanctifying virtue of this form of religious life.

Among the Salesians, they are those of Don Rua, his first successor, of little Dominic Savio, Don Bosco's favourite pupil, of Prince Augustus Czartoryski and of Father Beltrami, two young religious of the Society.

Among the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, they are those of Mother Mary Mazzarello, [1] who died in 1881 in the odour of sancitity, and of Sister Teresa Valsé-Pantellini, a model of obedience and abandonment to God.

Among the Co-operators, that of Don Dorothea de Chopitea, a noble Spanish lady, a woman of the world, the mother of five children, who managed to unite a most respected life in the world with the practice of the highest Christian virtues.

1 Mother Mary Mazzarello was canonized on June 24, 1951, and Dominic Savio on June 13, 1954.

The Builder of Churches

All these proceedings, these frequent journeys to Rome, this abundant correspondence with the Bishops of Piedmont and even of Italy, these unnumbered trials and hindrances, failed to check in any way the interior progress of the Institute. The Oratory widened its walls, lengthened its aisles, and its Sons freely multiplied; in 1860, they numbered four hundred. Lately they had built the church of St. Francis de Sales, because the Pinardi chapel was becoming too small, and now the church seemed inadequate. On Sundays, when the boarders, the day boys and the neighbours met there for the seven o'clock Mass, it was stifling. It was time to consider. In this district of Valdocco, scattered below Turin on the two banks of the Dora, Don Bosco saw that two thousand Christians lived in neglect without any religious helps. There were two parish churches, but almost two miles apart, and between them there was nothing but the Cottolengo chapel and the little church of St. Francis de Sales. This was not enough. A big building was needed, halfway between them.

The Saint yearned to build it. The project ripened year after year in his heart. On the evening of December 6, 1862, he had been hearing his boys' confessions very late in the little church of St. Francis de Sales. About eleven o'clock, he had seen his last penitent go away, and a few minutes later, along with one of his first disciples, Father Albera, he could at last sit down to a frugal supper. Contrary to custom, he appeared to be weary and preoccupied, as if lost in some absorbing reverie. He awoke from it suddenly with this remark: " I have been hearing so many confessions tonight that in the end I hardly knew what I was

doing or saying. One idea obsessed me all the time: when are we going to build a larger church than this one? Ours is too small; the boys are so packed together that it is pitiful to see them, and there is hardly any room for the neighbours. It will mean getting a lot of money. But never mind. If it be God's will, He will give us the church."

The Virgin's glorious title, Our Lady, Help of Christians, had become an obsession with him. Two days later, on December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, he said to Father Cagliero after Vespers: " The celebration was a success; I am quite satisfied. This, indeed, is the day on which we have started most of our undertakings; but the Blessed Virgin now wills us to honour her under the title of the Help of Christians. The times are evil; we really need her powerful help to keep and defend the faith. Hence it is to her, under that title, that I intend to erect a church. And then I have yet one more reason for it: guess what it is."

" It will be the mother church of our Congregation, from which will stream forth all the beneficent activities of your Sons on behalf of the young."

" You are right. Our Lady, Help of Christians, shall be the Foundress and permanent supporter of our Oratories."

" But where will you build the church? " asked Father Anfossi.

" Here, close by, opposite the chapel of St. Francis de Sales."

And then, with a wide sweep of his arm Don Bosco indicated a broad stretch of land opposite him.

" And will it be a big church? "

" Certainly; and people will flock to it from every quarter to honour the Mother of God."

" What about the money? "

" It is the Blessed Virgin who wants the church. She will see to that."

We must indeed believe that she wanted it, for six years afterwards they proceeded to the consecration of the magnificent church which every year, about May 24, sees multitudes flock into it and scenes of rare devotion enacted there.

Once more Don Bosco had seen things on a big scale. The church of Our Lady, Help of Christians, in the Renaissance style, covers a space of thirteen hundred square yards, and carries a statue of the Blessed

Virgin about a hundred and eighty feet above the ground, rising from a monumental cupola lighted by sixteen huge windows. Its sides shelter four chapels; and two others each terminate an arm of the Latin cross formed by the transepts. Behind the High Altar, a circular choir, large enough to hold a hundred people, also has three altars. No sooner have you crossed the threshold of the entrance door than a huge ceiling supports a spacious gallery, which enables three hundred performers to gather round the organ. The two sacristies are on a very large scale, and the peals of bells in the two belfries harmonise with the whole building.

At present, amidst the popular district for the religious life of which it beats the time and forms a much frequented centre for pilgrimages, it provides a suitable sanctuary. Men laughed at it and hell tried to ruin it. It had good reasons for its attempt. The church was to be built on the verge of a quarter in which low public houses scored their dubious successes on Saturday and Sunday evenings; it was anticipating the growth of a working class suburb by nearly twenty years; and lastly, it was to prove an irresistible focus of attraction for millions of the faithful of the whole world. A formidable citadel, reared against the onslaughts of evil, its erection must be prevented at all costs. A cruel Calvary which poor Don Bosco had to climb. It is the lot assigned to all builders of churches; they have to drive on their enterprises through all the conspiring powers of evil, and the more the obstructions they encounter the more doggedly they persist, because they are then fully convinced that God is on their side.

The first hindrance that Don Bosco ran against came from the owners of the land on which he had vowed to build his church. The land had formerly been his, bought at a good price in a day of plenty; it had been sold at a loss in a time of poverty. That never should be done, but can it always be avoided? The land had been made over to his good friend and benefactor Father Rosmini, the great Italian philosopher and the Founder of a Congregation, but it had passed at his death into the hands of those who had no use for it and were trying to get rid of it. But why, it may be asked, amongst the conditions of sale that bound their agent, did they stipulate that it should never be permitted to go to Don Bosco? Thus, the poor builder had to find a third party to purchase the site he so much desired.

Then the Muncipal Council put a sort of veto on the transaction.

They were willing to agree to the building of a church in this disastrous district, but they would not allow it to be dedicated to Mary, Help of Christians. This title apparently concealed some underground political significance. Remember that Piedmont was then in the throes of its disputes with the Papacy, and that the Archbishop of Turin was in exile at Lyons. That was enough to give rise to the supposition that faithful Catholics meant this title to be an appeal to Heaven for retribution. To invoke Mary, Help of Christians [1]: what that meant was quite clear. What subtle fellows some clever politicians are, and how perverse! To get over this objection, Don Bosco, in his official request to the municipality, gave no name to the proposed church. He only begged for permission to build it in a neglected quarter of the town; and that was granted.

The work began in May, 1863, with digging out the ground about eight feet deep, for the Saint wanted to use the basement for various services. To clear thirteen hundred square yards of ground to a depth of eight feet means a good deal. In buying the ground and the boards for the palisade they had flung all their cash reserves into the enterprise; four thousand lire. There was not a halfpenny left in hand when the first stroke of the pickaxe was given. " I have not even anything left for paying postage," groaned the procurator. " Let us make a start, all the same," replied Don Bosco. " Have we ever begun anything with any money in our pockets? We must leave a little room for Providence."

The room left was rather larger than he thought; the work of excavation was going on apace, when they discovered that the whole building would have to stand on alluvial soil. It was impossible to build on such unstable ground; and so piles had to be driven down sixty feet, to obtain a firm foundation for the future edifice. What an unexpected expense!

However, they succeeded in covering it; but a year afterwards in April, 1864, when it was time for the building to rise above the ground and to raise the walls, Don Bosco's cash box was quite empty. When the contractor asked him for an advance to pay the workmen, he answered: " Open your hands, take all I possess; it will be on account." And

1 The victories of the Church at Lepanto and Vienna are associated with the invocation of Mary, Help of Christians.

he overturned his purse into his petitioner's hands: four pennies fell out; that was all. The man was stupefied, but Don Bosco went on as optimistically as before: " Well, never mind. The Blessed Virgin will take care to find the money for the building of her church. I am only the cashier. You will see," he added with a confident smile.

He had no doubt about it.

He could have no doubt, for he was certain, since that remarkable dream of his in March, 1846. It was when he was about to be turned out into the street with all his herd of urchins, and he was asking himself in anguish where he could possibly find any lodging, when his astonished vision encountered a strange sight. Before him, and further than he could see, stretched a plain. Crowds of children were frolicking there, but what children! Some were cursing; others were fooling; a third band was flinging stones at one another. " I was going to run away from them," relates Don Bosco, " when at my side I heard a woman's voice saying: ' Go to them, and begin your work.'

" I went towards them, but what could I do? I had no place for them, and no helpers. I then turned towards the mysterious Lady, with a supplicating look."

" ' Do you want a place for them? ' she asked: ' well, here is one.' "

" ' But it is only a field.' "

" ' Never mind that. My Son and the Apostles had not a stone whereon to lay their heads.' "

" Then I set to work; but it was no use hearing confessions, preaching and admonishing. I felt I could do nothing substantial until I had an enclosed place in which to gather these poor little fellows together. Then the Lady led me a little farther northwards."

" ' Look,' she said."

" I saw a small chapel with a very low roof, a small playground, and a large number of children. I resumed the work with ardour, and God blessed it to such a degree that all these premises were too confined."

" Then the Lady showed me another church which was much larger, and a good-sized house close by. Then she took me by the hand and led me opposite to the church: ' It is here,' said she, ' that the three martyrs of Turin, soldiers of the Theban Legion, Solutor, Adventor and Octavius, suffered excution. I want God to be honoured here in a special manner.' "

" At this moment, I saw that I was surrounded with youths, whose number kept constantly increasing; and my means of action also increased simultaneously. Then I observed rising up before me, on the very place of the martyrdom of the three soldiers, a very large church, girdled with an imposing range of buildings which culminated in a grand monument."

These were the three stages his Oratory had to go through before reaching its final goal; the chapel with the very low roof was Pinardi House; the second and much larger church was the church of St. Francis de Sales, which stood in the midst of the Oratory playgrounds; and the third church was that of Our Lady, Help of Christians. The past which had been realised step by step was a guarantee for the future, and the serene and confident faith of the Servant of God was staked on a certainty.

But trials were not wanting. In the course of five years, how often the work was stopped, resumed, interrupted afresh, and again renewed, according to the influx or exhaustion of his resources. To a friend in Rome he wrote in 1867: " I had forty masons on the works, but I have now six only. Not a copper in the cash box! " He had reckoned, at the outset, on a total expenditure of two hundred thousand francs, and the whole work swallowed up over a million. At one time, baffled with difficulties, he contemplated doing away with the cupola, which was going to cost an enormous sum. For five years his life was a perpetual torment, a constant race after money. His fertile imagination yearly invented some new method of loosening purse strings, and his constant persistency knocked at every door. He had corrected the old saw and used to say: " Help yourself, for God *is* your helper." And he went forward with confidence.

Sometimes, with the authorisation of the Government, he started a monster lottery, the drawing of which often had to be deferred, because the tickets were selling too slowly; sometimes he posted circulars to all clients of Mary in Italy, begging them to help him. One year, he asked the Municipal Council for the thirty thousand francs they traditionally paid towards building in parishes that were on the increase, and when he did not get them he begged the Administration at any rate not to interfere with him, if, for the building of his church, he had chipped a corner off a piece of land adjoining his own. Another year, he knocked

at the door of some Prince or at the heart of Pius IX, who sent him " a mite " of five hundred francs and an encouraging blessing. At other times, he opened subscription-lists, in which one put down his name for a brick, another for a sack of cement, another for a pilaster, another for a window.

Later on, in 1867, being at the end of both resources and expedients, he took his hat and pilgrim's staff and travelled through Northern and Central Italy to Rome, to collect funds. It was a fruitful expedition, in the course of which the two aristocracies of Florence and of Rome vied with one another; the one giving him the price of an altar dedicated to St. Anne and six wonderful copper candelabra, and the other two marble altars for the side chapels and a rich carpet for the pavement of the sanctuary. Already, at Turin, the Duchess De Montmorency-Laval had guaranteed the cost of the splendid painting over the high altar.

This generous benefactress, and a hundred others, he plagued with his insistent supplications. To the Marchese di Fassati he sent this charming appeal: " The walls of our church are now over six feet high, and our work yards are full of life. I hear the Marchesa asking: ' And the cash box, how high is that? ' Alas, since she left us, it has been going down appreciably. But I hope that, as God has helped us visibly hitherto, He will not allow the work to be stopped."

Or take this note to the Countess Callori: " The statue of the Virgin, which is to crown the cupola of our church, is going to cost us more than we thought. It must be nearly ten feet high in heavy copper, and highly finished in every part. The bill, they assure me, will come to twelve thousand francs. I have already found a good lady who promises me eight thousand. I have certainly no intention of asking you for the rest, unless . . . unless our good Mother has been raining gold upon you of late."

Lastly, when the Saint had exhausted every human means calculated to bring him in resources, he advanced his heavy artillery. That is to say, the wonder-worker in him awoke and wrought such miracles as alone could defray the expenses of building. When the church was finished, its builder could say: " There is not a single stone which does not stand for some favour granted by Our Lady, Help of Christians." This was true. To choose one example out of hundreds, this is how the

famous cupola, at one moment so nearly abandoned, found the benefactor who finished it.

An old friend of Don Bosco's, Commendatore Cotta, a Senator, was slowly dying, in Turin, at the age of eighty-four.

" Well, it is all over with me, Father," he murmured to Don Bosco. " In a few moments I shall be leaving you for eternity."

" No, no," replied the man of God. " The Blessed Virgin still needs you in this world for the building of her church."

" How glad I should be to help you! But, you can see, there is not a shadow of hope."

" And what would you do if Mary, Help of Christians, restored you to health? "

" Six months in succession I will give two thousand francs to your enterprise."

" Very well, I am going back to our boys, and I will set them praying, and we will win the favour. Have confidence."

Three days afterwards. Don Bosco was writing a letter, and saw the dying man standing in the doorway cured and active, and happy to bring the first instalment of two thousand francs in his own hands. He lived three years more, and till the day of his death, he never ceased helping the Servant of God in his undertakings.

Another time — it was November 16, 1866 — Don Bosco had to pay four thousand francs that evening to the contractors, and had not a single coin towards that amount.

From early in the morning, Don Rua, the procurator, and a few of his assistants had started on a campaign. God knows how many streets they had traversed, how many stairs they had climbed, and, at eleven o'clock, they returned with a thousand francs. It was all they had been able to get.

As they looked at one another in consternation without saying a word, Don Boco began to smile.

" Well," he said, " after dinner I will go and fetch the rest."

At one o'clock, he takes his hat and goes out, hoping for some intervention of divine Providence.

After making several rounds at haphazard, he finds himself opposite the principal railway station. At that moment, he is accosted by a liveried servant.

" Father, are you Don Bosco? "

" Yes, what can I do for you? "

" My master has sent me to beg you to come and see him at once."

" Let us go and see your master. Is it far? "

" No, he lives yonder, at the end of the street," and he shows Don Bosco a magnificent mansion.

" Does this house belong to him? "

" Certainly. He is tremendously wealthy. He might well do something for your church."

They come to a very fine room, where a middle-aged gentleman is lying in bed; he shows great joy on seeing Don Bosco.

" Reverend Father, I need your prayers; you should set me on my feet once more."

" Have you been ill long? "

" I have not left this bed of suffering for three years: I cannot move, and the doctors give me no hope. If I obtain the slightest relief, I will indeed make an offering to your enterprises."

" What a fortunate occurrence. This very day, we want three thousand francs for the church of Our Lady, Help of Christians."

" Three thousand francs! I can't manage that, Father. If it were a few hundred francs, we might see about it, but three thousand! One has to go to the bank, and also through formalities."

" And why should you not get up and go to the bank? We want the money tonight."

" You are joking; it is three years since I have left my bed: it is impossible."

" Nothing is impossible to God and to Mary, Help of Christians."

And saying this, Don Bosco gathers together into the room all the people in the house to the number of thirty. He shows them a prayer to the Blessed Sacrament and to Our Lady, which he repeats with them. That done, he orders them to bring the sick man's clothes.

" Clothes! But the gentleman has none left. It is three years since he has been dressed; we don't know where his things are."

" Go and buy the nearest you can find," cries the sick man impatiently. " Do what the Father tells you."

In the midst of this scene enters the doctor, who wants to put a stop to what he calls a piece of sheer madness.

But the clothes have been found; the sick man puts them on, and he walks with great strides through the room, to the unutterable stupefaction of all present.

He orders the carriage to be got ready, and, while it is being done, he has lunch laid, and partakes of it with such an appetite as he has not known for years.

Then, quite reinvigorated, he goes downstairs, refusing all assistance, and gets into the carriage.

A few minutes afterwards, he returns to Don Bosco with the three thousand francs.

" I am thoroughly cured," he keeps saying.

" You take your money out of the bank," says Don Bosco " and Our Lady, Help of Christians, takes you out of the bed."

Thus it was by dint of miracles and hard work, after many a stop and many a start, that the Saint saw his dream crowned with success. When the church was completed and its great dome rose above the adjoining roofs, a happy thought occurred to the builder. Within twenty-four hours the arches of the cupola were to be hermetically sealed together. A few rough stones were to be fitted in, and the great work would be finished. Then Don Bosco wanted to have the last stone that was to crown the edifice sealed in by the hand of a boy. In the presence of a multitude of the faithful, friends and young folks invited to the ceremony, the man of God on that September evening was seen slowly and cautiously climbing up the series of iron ladders that led to the summit of the building. In front of him climbed the little Emmanuel Fassati, son of the Marchese Fassati and of the Countess De Maistre, two great benefactors of the church. Below, the crowd, with deep emotion, watched the ascent of the priest and the boy. When both of them leaned over the great cupola to close it by fitting in the last stone, a tremendous cheer broke out from the people to greet the symbolic group which seemed to incarnate faith, hope and charity.

This scene took place in the autumn of 1866. Nearly two more years were needed to finish the interior masonry and decorations, and to furnish the sanctuary. At last came the dawn of the great day so long looked forward to. On June 9, 1868, Mgr. Riccardi di Netro, Archbishop of Turin, proceeded to the consecration of the church dedicated to Mary, Help of Christians. When, at about ten in the morning, the dedication

under closed doors was over, the church was thrown open to the faithful, and it was swamped by the rush of the crowd. In a few minutes the farthest corners were filled, and it was in the presence of a dense and deeply devout multitude that the Archbishop celebrated the first Mass. That of the Saint followed: it was but a hymn of thanksgiving to the Mother of God, whose assistance had enabled this magnificent sanctuary to be built in five years.

Michael Angelo passed away, we are told, before seeing the rise under the Roman sky of the marvellous dome that was to crown St. Peter's. Among his sketches he could look at the design; he could close his eyes and still see its grandiose form in imagination; but his bodily eyes never saw it in this world. What a supreme sorrow!

This was spared to Don Bosco. For more than twenty years, with an eye which was not of the body, he saw rising above the field in which his boys were playing the great church crowned with its dome, which he was to erect in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There it stood, airy and impalpable, above the great playground trodden by his crowd of urchins. How often had he seen it in his dreams, just as it was one day to come into being! Sometimes the vision grew so clear that he would imagine that his eyes could not be the only ones to perceive it.

" Boys, boys," he would say, " look up, right up yonder: don't you see the statue of the Virgin with a halo of light on her head? "

Then he would point out some mysterious spot where he seemed really to see it. And the boys would look at him and at one another, astonished and uneasy.

But on June 9, when the church had been consecrated and thrown open to the faithful, the boys had become men, and their astonishment and uneasiness turned into veneration. They now saw the explanation of it all and wondered and admired. That evening all the windows of the Oratory were lighted up, the courtyard resounded with music and songs, a crowd of boys thronged in, coming from the two neighbouring Salesian Houses, Lanzo and Mirabello, and up yonder, at the spot pointed out by Don Bosco, haloed with many coloured lights, Mary, Help of Christians, was enthroned on her cupola.

" Don Bosco, do you remember? " asked an old boy. " Twenty years ago, you used to point her out to us with your finger."

"That is true," said Don Bosco, "quite true. What I saw then, you are now gazing at. Holy Mother, how you love us!"

The year 1868 was not ended before Don Bosco was already thinking of transferring his building activities to another quarter of the town. In 1847, as we have seen, the excessive increase in his membership had caused an overflow, and he had opened a new Oratory, that of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, close to the main railway station of Turin. There, Father Borel, Father Murialdo, and later Don Rua had undertaken the responsibility of looking after the boys on the south side of the town. At that time the district was scarcely more populous than that of Valdocco when Don Bosco first settled there. It was the general quarters of all the washerwomen of Turin. The river was close by, with its shallow stream and little dry stands; and there were plenty of waste grounds on which to dry the washing. Ragamuffins swarmed in those deserted stretches which were rarely visited by the police. It was a truly strategic position.

But he was not the only person to perceive the possibilities of the district. Within a short time the Waldensians established their principal missionary centre in the same region. Alongside of the plane tree Avenue — today, the Corso Vittorio Emanuele — a charming and healthy locality, in which rose year by year business premises and villa residence, they erected an imposing chapel, and near it they opened schools and a soup kitchen. The danger was a serious one and it was necessary to counter it as soon as possible. And that is why, at the beginning of 1868, when the great work of building the church of Our Lady, Help of Christians, was barely finished, Don Bosco thought of setting up a Catholic belfry close to the front of the Waldensian chapel.

But there was one impediment in the way: the ground required for building was not to be bought. Most of it was in the hands of the Waldensians, who got wind of the proposal and tried to thwart it in every possible way. Above all, there was a patch of over four hundred square yards, in the site desired by Don Bosco, which he could not get hold of. Without this bit of land, the dimensions of the church would necessarily be restricted, and it would have to be placed at an angle with the Avenue. It would look appallingly ugly. The Waldensian who was the possessor of the piece of land, suspecting the role it was to play in the general scheme, would not accept less than one hundred and

thirty thousand francs, at least six times as much as it was worth. Six years of negotiations led to no result; and they were driven to have recourse to the Minister of Public Works and to the State Council to get a declaration that the building of the church was a matter of public interest, and that the land must be compulsorily expropriated. But the bundle of papers containing the request found some accomplice in high quarters who left it lie sleeping for several years in the portfolios of the Administration. At last they succeeded in awaking them, and on February 6, 1876, a royal decree declared that the proposed building of the church was a matter of public interest. The Waldensian now saw that the game was up, and quickly had a mountain of stones amassed on this land, and then asked for six months to clear it away. The hindrance threatened to reappear in another shape. The Saint then started a lawsuit against the wrong-headed obstructionist, and, after an official report, the Waldensian was ordered to cede the ground when he had cleared off the stones for the modest sum of twenty-three thousand francs. The last obstacle was now removed, and the undertaking could proceed.

The work of excavation was begun without delay. On August 14, 1878, the Vicar General of the archdiocese blessed the corner-stone of the building. The church was in the Romano-Lombard style and was to be nearly two hundred feet long by seventy feet wide, and it was to hold about five thousand people. Thanks to the generosity of all the benefactors frequently invited to contribute by the *Salesian Bulletin,* the building was rapidly pushed on, and in four years it was completed. It is true that Pius IX's blessing rested upon it. A few months before he died, the Pontiff had welcomed and encouraged the proposal: " Go on with the work," he said to Don Bosco, " God's blessing will be with you." And he had emphasised his approbation by making the generous contribution of two thousand francs.

Don Bosco had estimated the cost of the church at about half a million francs; but the actual expenses came to well over a million. The Saint faced them with a stout heart, for he already saw how the church was countering the religious propaganda of the adjoining chapel, and disseminating Catholic truth and grace amidst the faithful living round it.

This church, erected in spite of so many difficulties, he dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, the patron of Pius IX, formerly Cardinal

John Mastai Ferretti. At its entrance was a monumental statue of the great Pope in white Carrara marble by the Milanese sculptor Confalonieri. This superb church was one of the finest in Turin, and it was thrown open for public worship by Archbishop Gastaldi; and it was an *ex-voto* of gratitude to the grand old man who, during a pontificate of more than thirty years, had never ceased to overwhelm Don Bosco and his Sons with favours.

Scarcely had this great enterprise been completed when Pius IX's successor, Pope Leo XIII, laid upon the weary shoulders of the poor builder a burden that appeared to be altogether too heavy. In Rome, during 1878, a few months before the death of Pius IX, a committee of Catholics had been formed to erect on the Esquiline a church to the Sacred Heart. The Eternal City had not as yet a sanctuary consecrated to that devotion, and the old Pope had not only blessed the proposal, but had purchased the site for it at his own expense. No idea could have been more happy or more opportune, for a whole town was in course of being built in the district adjoining the main railway station. Very few Romans, but many Piedmontese, Ligurians, Venetians and Lombards were camping out there, attracted to the spot by the extension of Rome. It was a very mixed population: " There are good Catholics among these good people," wrote a Salesian who had made a study of the region, " but also a good many who are indifferent, and plenty of riffraff; there are also a fair number of protestants and . . . fanatical Turks." This was, indeed, an interesting flock, unfortunately without a shepherd, and without a fold. Between St. Mary Major and St. Lawrence Outside the Walls there was no Catholic belfry; but, on the other hand, there were not a few protestant chapels.

Then the place was well chosen for the erection of a church dedicated to the Sacred Heart. After the death of Pius IX, Leo XIII, who as Archbishop of Perugia had been the first Bishop to consecrate his diocese to the Sacred Heart, resumed the project, and charged his Vicar in Rome, Cardinal Monaco la Valletta, to push on with it boldly. The good Cardinal did all he could; he addressed the Catholic episcopate of the whole world a circular begging them to help him financially in bringing the undertaking to a successful issue in memory of the great Pope lately deceased. Offerings flowed in from almost all sides, and the footings were nearly ready by August 17, 1879, when the foundation stone was

laid. Unhappily, soon afterwards, the work had to stop for want of means. The foundations had had to be sunk sixty feet so as not to rest upon the levels of old kaolin mines; this had exhausted the available resources, and no fresh funds were coming in. What could be done? Leo XIII was anxious about the situation, and was talking of it one day to some of the Cardinals after a Consistory.

" What a pity," said he, " that we cannot go forward! The glory of God, the honour of the Holy See and the spiritual welfare of so many neglected souls are involved in this enterprise; I really cannot see my way out of the perplexity."

" I could suggest one way to you, Holy Father," said Cardinal Alimonda.

" And what is that? "

" Entrust the business to Don Bosco; he will manage to carry it through."

" Will he undertake it? "

" I know him well; he will regard Your Holiness's desire as a command."

The Pope lost no time. The Saint was then staying on his way through Rome, having been led thither to converse with Leo XIII concerning the plans made and the difficulties encounted in Patagonia by the first Salesian missionaries. An audience was granted him on April 5, 1880, in the course of which this heavy task was entrusted to him.

As soon as he was back in Turin, he summoned his Chapter to take their opinion on the proposal. The discussion was a long one. Don Bosco's six counsellors were alarmed at seeing their Father look so worn out and overburdened with infirmities, and now, at his age, assuming so heavy a load. This new undertaking, thought they, will shorten his life, and that all the more because the church of St. John the Evangelist is so far from being free from debt that it is a formidable drain upon the funds of the Society. In the ballot, which was secret, there were six *No's* and one *Yes*. This vote did not surprise Don Bosco: " You have voted," said he, " as human prudence directs; and that is quite right. But believe me, if instead of voting *No*, you now vote *Yes*, I can assure you that the Heart of Jesus, to whom the church is to be dedicated, will sends funds and pay our debts and make us a handsome gift in addition." The inspiration with which he uttered these words so

persuaded the Council that every vote was a *Yes*. Furthermore, they proposed to the Holy Father a modification in his plans. On the one hand, the projected building seemed rather poor; and on the other, Don Bosco and his Council wanted to build alongside of the church a large boarding house for the poor and neglected youths of Rome. The plan was agreed to by the Pope, and, to realise it, the Saint bought nearly six thousand square yards of new ground close to the foundations.

Then they began to run up the scaffolding. To collect the funds needed for the building — about three thousand pounds a month — Don Bosco began by drawing up a circular addressed to the episcopate of the whole world and to all the editors of the Catholic press, explaining the origin, the nature and the object of the undertaking. He also interested the Roman patricians, who subscribed the granite columns which supported the church. A monster lottery, with eight thousand prizes, brought in a large amount of cash. On the initiative of Count Balbo of Turin, Catholic Italy, after an appeal from the Archbishop of Turin, clubbed together to present to the Holy Father a sum to defray the cost of the facade. Leo XIII himself, who had told Don Bosco that he could not do much to help him, sometimes came to his assistance.

" Well, is the work progressing? " he asked the Saint at an audience on April 23, 1881.

" Yes, indeed, Holy Father. We have more than one hundred and fifty masons at work. The charity of the faithful encourages us in our task: but I confess that the undertaking begins to weigh heavily on my poor old shoulders."

" Then, take this, Don Bosco," said Leo XIII, handing him a roll of five thousand francs. " I have received it in my right hand, and pass it on to you with my left, and I hope that others will do a little to follow my example for the sake of an enterprise so dear to my heart."

And certainly they did so, but not to the extent demanded by the importance of the undertaking. More than once the work had to stop and wait for funds. In accepting the charge, the Saint had hoped that the church would be finished in four years; but, unhappily, in 1883 the roof had only just been put on. Don Bosco was uneasy, and no longer knew what doors to knock at. But one day he made up his mind; he would carry his appeal to the charity of France. He was right;

he divined that for this devotion, born on her soil, France would show herself generous.

From the very first, he found her liberal even beyond his expectations. One of her benefactors, Count Colle of Toulon, opened his safe for him, and allowed him, so to speak, to help himself with both hands. Then Don Bosco went to Paris, and francs flowed in by tens of thousands to pay the bills of Rome. It was in the course of this journey that he spoke an admirable word about France, a word that sprang straight from his grateful heart. One of his religious, Father Bellamy, was talking to him, and betrayed his fear lest his hope should prove abortive.

" Your arrival there will be at a very unlucky time," said he. " Just now they are making an appeal for Montmartre, the foundations of which are swallowing up millions; they are also begging for the speedy building of Catholic schools which an iniquitous law has just compelled us to put up. Do you think purses will also be opened for this church in Rome? "

" Ah! how little do you know your own country! " replied the Saint. " France is a great country; France has money for every need; she gives unceasingly and untiringly. Say what you will, despite storms and trials, she remains to those who know her well — and Don Bosco is one of them — generous France."

When, from time to time, his Sons of Rome or the architect himself asked him about some detail of the plan or some modification of the original design, he always ended his reply with this order: " And let the church be worthy of the Sacred Heart and worthy of Rome." It was. Nearly two hundred feet long, eighty feet wide, in the Renaissance style, it was in the form of the great Roman basilicas with three naves. The principal entrance and the two side doors were framed in vertical mullions of Carrara marble, finely carved. Within, twelve solid grey granite columns, with Corinthian chapiters, mark out the great lines of the sanctuary; more than a hundred and fifty frescoes enliven the walls; and six side altars, all of precious marbles, as well as a baptistery, perhaps the most beautiful in Rome after those of the great basilicas, decorate the periphery of the building. Lastly, at the entrance, on the right-hand side, a majestic statue, an exact reproduction of that of Saint John the Evangelist at Turin, rears, in pure Parian marble, the paternal

figure of Pius IX. His right hand is giving the blessing, whilst his left holds the Brief of approbation of the Salesian Congregation. On the pedestal is written:

PIO IX P.M.
Alteri Salesianorum parenti
Filii posuerunt

No title was more merited, no gratitude was more sincere.

It was on May 4, 1887, that the consecration of the church by Cardinal Parocchi, the Vicar of His Holiness, took place. The Saint was impatient for the dawn of this day, for his poor body, afflicted by a relentless malady, felt life slowly ebbing away. " If you want me to attend the ceremony," he kept saying, " let it be before the end of May; after that, it will be too late."

To heighten the splendour of the festival, the full *Schola Cantorum* of the Turin Oratory had gone to Rome; and magnificent indeed was the ceremony of the consecration that opened to the faithful, in a quarter soon to number twenty thousand inhabitants, a church " worthy of Rome and worthy of the Sacred Heart."

More than once, during the sacred rite, the Saint was seen to weep: tears of gratitude of the good and faithful servant, thanking his Master for having chosen him to raise to His glory, to the glory of His Mother, and to the glory of the beloved Disciple, in a quarter of a century, these three noble sanctuaries, in which the souls of the little ones and of the humble would go to quench their thirst at the Spring of living water that floweth unto life eternal.

The Seer

In the preceding chapters we have merely made incidental allusions to the almost constant intercourse between the Servant of God, from the age of ten, and the supernatural world from which he appeared to derive all the guidance that directed his thought and actions. At this point it may be well to give our readers the key to his career by showing that this poor young cowherd was indeed sent by God for a special mission definitely laid upon him, since heavenly illumination and power were so plain to him. The future had few secrets for him, and the material world deviated from its customary course at his prayers: he was both a seer and a wonder-worker.

When to those who had known him for fifty years this question is put: " What impression did he make upon you? " they all give the same reply: " A kindly face, full of simplicity, an affable smile and an intelligent brow; " but what struck one more than anything else was his look. Oh, those eyes, they pierced one through and through. It was disconcerting. What was hidden from other men, John Bosco saw. The mystery of hearts, the secrets of consciences, men's innermost thoughts: also the future and the end of anyone's life; he read it all with marvellous lucidity and unrivalled clairvoyance. Any satisfactory natural explanation of this cannot be devised; first of all, the instances are too many, and they manifestly surpass mere human power. This keen insight into men, things and events was a gift from God who thus accredited His Servant's mission.

How often, for instance, did he discover to one of his boys or friends, or even to those whom he did not know, their future in this world.

The Salesian Congregation was already founded. One of its members, an excellent subject, was tormented with the idea that God willed him to join one of the older religious Orders. Hence, he went to see Don Bosco, and told him of the temptation, but in such a way as if he had decided not to listen to any advice.

Don Bosco perceived this very quickly, and cut short a clearly useless conversation with these simple words: " Go, since you wish to go. But if you are not mad, you will be."

The poor fellow, being wrapped up in his project, took but little notice of the warning, and left for the novitiate of the religious Order he had chosen.

He had been a professed religious for twelve years, when his superiors had to set him free, so that his poor head might regain its equilibrium; he was mad, but not so far as to need to be kept under restraint. Thus Don Bosco was justified; but God, in His goodness, cured the rash religious, who, joining the secular clergy, showed himself to be a zealous priest.

Another time, at Saint Ignazio, Don Bosco was conducting a retreat, which was attended by many gentlemen from Turin. They were at church for evening prayers; Don Bosco was reciting them aloud, with that pious accent that one could never forget after having once heard him. He was beginning the second verse of the *De profundis*, when he suddenly stopped dead, while his eyes seemed to be following something moving down the church.

At the end of about a minute, he sighed and lowered his eyes again, and tried to go on with the psalm. He could only stammer, muddling everything, mixing Italian and Latin together. At last, he gave it up, and cut all short with a resolute sign of the cross.

Next day, his young clerics surrounded him and remarked, in a tone of gentle banter: " Fancy Don Bosco forgetting his prayers! "

To one of them, who was more circumspect and ended by asking why he had been distracted, Don Bosco replied: " Just when I was saying *Si iniquitates*, I saw two flames start from the altar. On one of them I read the word *Heresy*, and on the other *Death*; and as they were flying towards the bottom of the church, I looked after them with anxiety that is easily understood.

" They rested upon the heads of two persons whom I could clearly recognise by the light of these flames."

Soon afterwards a great merchant of Turin, a well-known Catholic, went over to Protestantism with a loud flourish of trumpets; and a little later another of the retreatants died.

One day in 1855, Don Bosco was surrounded with a few clerics: Rua, Francesia, Cagliero, Turchi and Anfossi, and he suddenly flung into their conversation the following prophecy: " One of you will one day be a Bishop. He will not be the only one who will arise from the Oratory; but the others are not here." As a matter of fact, on December 7, 1884, Father Cagliero, the head of the first expedition of Salesian missionaries, was consecrated Bishop of Magida. He was to die a Cardinal of Holy Church.

When he was passing through France in 1883, and particularly during his very short stay at Amiens, Don Bosco met a young girl, who talked to him of her vocation to the religious state. " My child," he replied, after listening to her for some time, " I see you have the gift of prudence. Carefully cherish it, and may God watch over you. You will have to wait long before you can realise your design, but at last you will join a Congregation which was founded in the year of your birth." In fact, twelve years later this young girl joined the Little Sisters of the Assumption, who were founded in 1864, the year in which she was born. Don Bosco had never seen the girl before; he knew nothing about her, neither of her age nor of the difficulties which were to keep her so long in the world.

In the same way, he knew nothing of the character of the young man who, on the morning of October 29, 1882, happened to be praying close to the altar rails of St. Peter's chapel where he was saying Mass. When the Holy Sacrifice was over, Don Bosco, with the chalice in his hands, was descending the altar steps to return to the sacristy, when he saw a small flame leave the altar of Our Lady and go to rest upon the stranger's head. Taken aback, Don Bosco stopped a moment to make sure that he was not mistaken, and then went into the sacrity. Half an hour later, he was talking with a band of children in the playground, when he saw the young man of his vision standing a little way off. " Oh! " he exclaimed, leaving the boys, and then called the stranger by name, and continued talking to him in French, leading him towards his

own room. What did they say to one another? We cannot tell; but Mgr. Malan, Salesian Bishop of Petrolina, in Brazil, apostle to the Indian tribes in the State of Matto Grosso, could do so, for it was he whom, on that autumn morning, Don Bosco got to give up the world and enter the ranks of the Salesian army, soon after the renewal of the strange phenomenon of the first Pentecost.

Of the future of his interlocutors Don Bosco would sometimes reveal the time of their death.

To one of his Sons, the lay brother Nasi, who, along with Father Bologne, was one of the Founders of the Salesian Mission at Marseilles, he said one morning in February, 1882, while the good religious was finishing a shave for him: " Perhaps you are expecting a tip. I will give you one, but not at all the sort of tip you are expecting. Listen well: go on helping Don Bologne with all your might. You will follow him about more or less everywhere all over France, where he will govern several Houses. Yet he will not end his life in France, but at Turin. When you hear of his death, get ready; your own will be close at hand."

Father Bologne did, in fact, die of apoplexy at Turin, on January 4, 1907; and within six months, on december 7, the lay brother Nasi, who was ready, ended his days in the same manner.

With Don Rua, the Saint was less definite. All the same, from the beginning of 1853, Rua, who was then sixteen, was certain of living half of a century. On the occasion of the feast that took place at Turin in honour of the miracle [1] of the Blessed Sacrament, Don Bosco had written a popular pamphlet which the public had seized upon. Seeing the success of the publication, the Saint said to his young secretary: " In 1903, when the feast will take place to celebrate the ninth centenary, you must have the pamphlet reprinted. I shall not be there; but you will be."

1 This eucharistic miracle is well known. It goes back to 1453. Robbers had stolen a monstrance ciborium from the church of Exilles, in Upper Piedmont. In going through Turin, their mule, when close to the Town Hall, refused to proceed, and the Host, leaving the sacred vessel, rose into the air, where it remained for several hours. On the evening of that day, at the prayer of a crowd which had assembled, it came to rest on a paten in the hands of the Bishop. At the place where the miracle occured rises one of the richest churches of Turin, called the Church of the Miracle of the Blessed Sacrament.

" Oh, Don Bosco," rejoined the young man, " that is easily said, but death may play me some scurvy trick between now and then."

" Death will play you no such trick, I guarantee you. Then remember to publish my booklet anew."

Don Rua, fifteen years later, seemed to have forgotten the prophecy entirely when, just after the festival celebrated for the consecration of the church of Mary, Help of Christians, he fell exhausted by his labours, utterly worn out. In twenty-four hours he was suddenly attacked with peritonitis. And Don Bosco was away. Scarcely had he returned, and he was at the very door of his house, when informed of the sad news. It was the eve of the monthly recollection of his boys; but instead of going to the infirmary, he went straight to the sacristy to confess the boys who were waiting for him. He came out very late. At this moment, they urged him once more to go to the bedside of the sick man, whose state was hourly growing worse. Don Bosco with a kindly smile went to the refectory for his late supper; after which he went up to his room tc put down the papers which he had brought back from his journey, and only then appeared to remember Don Rua. As soon as the patient saw him at his bedside, he said:

" Oh, Don Bosco, if my last hour has come, don't fear to tell me so; I am ready for anything."

" Dear Don Rua," replied the Saint, " I will not — you well know that I will not — have you die. You have yet too much to do."

And he blessed him.

Next morning, after Mass, he was again with his Son, comforting him and entertaining him with a few witty remarks. The doctor in attendance, following the course of the peritonitis with anxiety, had almost abandoned all hope, and said so to the Servant of God.

" It may be even more serious than you say, doctor," answered Don Bosco: " but Don Rua must get well: he has too much to do along with me." And discovering on the table a bag containing the Holy Oils, he asked: " What is this? "

" Why, it is the Holy Oil for the Extreme Unction of Don Rua," replied Don Savio.

" Ah, people of little faith! " said the Servant of God. " Hearken well, Don Rua," he added, addressing the sick man with a touch of

humour, " hearken well; even if they were to pitch you just as you are out of the window, I assure you, you would not die."

In fact, he lived forty-two years longer and, faithful to the order given him, in 1903 he had the booklet written by his Father reprinted.

It was of a somewhat similar episode that one of Don Bosco's first boys, Father Provera, was the hero in 1862. In that year he contracted a violent pleurisy.

One morning when he was at his worst, they administered Extreme Unction to him, and Don Bosco went to see him after Mass.

" Well, Francis, are you sorry to leave this poor world? Would you rather stay with us or go away? "

" Eh! Father, I hardly know," replied Francis, " give me until this evening to think it over."

Soon afterwards, he said to himself: " What a fool I am not to have answered that I wanted to go to paradise. Don Bosco must promise me that, and then I shall be sure of my business."

In the evening, Don Bosco came back. " Father," hastily remarked the sick man, " I have made up my mind; I prefer to go away, if you promise me that I shall go to paradise."

" It is not yet time, my poor Francis," replied Don Bosco. " You will get well and live for some time; but be ready for a good deal of suffering."

Indeed, he recovered; but his legs were afflicted with many sores, and he had to endure protracted sufferings.

However, he became a priest, and went on suffering until his death, which happened twelve years afterwards, in 1874.

However impressive these prophetic intuitions concerning people's future may be, they were nothing compared with the prescience of the Saint with regard to the death of his Sons. The richness of this second group of phenomena is truly embarrassing: let us then select some of the most dramatic cases.

On January 25, 1859, Don Bosco finished the few sentences he had tc say after evening prayers with these words: " Let us be ready for death, for before a month is over one of us has to appear before God. Who will it be? I, or you? Let us watch and pray." One of the young Latin scholars, named Berardi, who was listening to him, said to him before going to bed: " You were speaking for me, Father, were you

St. Mary Mazzarello whom Don Bosco used to begin the Salesian Sisters

not? " Don Bosco made no reply. A fortnight went by, and no one had fallen ill. When in class on February 7th Berardi turned to the boy next to and said: " Here, look at this wretched pimple on my lip? Who can tell whether it may not be dangerous? I cannot get Don Bosco's prediction out of my head; may it not have refered to me? " After recreation that evening he returned to study, and again said to his neighbour, little Paul Albera: " See how much bigger it is getting: it is queer." That night he was in a fever, and next morning he could not get up. " It won't come to anything," he said to the infirmarian who was bringing him some broth. But Don Bosco did not share his opinion; he called in the doctor, who diagnosed a general poisoning of the blood from the bite of a coal fly, and ordered the boy's immediate transfer to the hospital, where he died next day. Sixteen days only had passed between the prophecy and its realisation.

In February, 1862, Cagliero and another cleric met Don Bosco on the stairs. They were on their way to tell him of the death of a pupil of the Oratory: " He will not be the only one," said the Saint; " within two months from now two others will appear before God." The two superintendents begged to be given their names, and Don Bosco named them, entreating his questioners to watch over their behaviour, and the company they kept, so that they might reach their last hour well prepared. Cagliero wrote down these two names on a piece of paper which he slipped into an envelope, sealed down and handed to the procurator. Two months had not gone by before both boys had departed from this world. Forty-seven years afterwards, Mgr. Cagliero, Archbishop of Cesarea, still remembered the poignant feeling that wrung his heart when he saw the two youths in the playground, both of them destined to die, running about and jumping and singing in full unconcern, and the shock the good procurator experienced when, after the second funeral, he tore open the envelope and read the names of the two boys who had so lately died.

Two years afterwards, in 1864, to the good infirmarian, named Mancardi, Don Bosco confided this secret: " There are two of our apprentices who will leave for eternity before the end of Lent: they are Tarditi and Palo. Keep your eyes open, and do your best to help them to die a good death." The same day Mancardi wrote the secret on a piece of paper, which he sealed up in an envelope and handed to Don

Alasonatti, the prefect of the House. On the envelope he wrote: *Don Bosco's Prediction: to be opened after Easter,* 1864. That year Easter, fell on March 27; but young Palo died on February 26, and young Tarditi on March 12.

Another time, the Saint happened to be in the company of a few clerics and boys at Vignale, at the house of his good friend, Count Callori. He had just been preaching to a crowded church on one of his favourite subjects: Mary, Refuge of Sinners. Soon after Benediction was over, finding himself surrounded by his Sons, he stopped for a moment, looking serious and silent; then he suddenly remarked: " Let us kneel down and say an *Ave* for one of your companions who must die tonight." Fancy how the boys must have felt on hearing such news as this. No sooner had they risen from their knees than one of them, named Davico, exclaimed:

" A lively bit of news for a holiday."

" Look at Davico: he's afraid of dying," said Don Bosco.

" No, I'm not afraid; but, all the same, it is not the sort of news to give one a good appetite."

" Don't be uneasy," added the Saint, " the one who is going to die is not here. Just now he is engaged in a rollicking game in the Oratory playground, and not suspecting that before the day is over he will be at the judgement seat of God."

After evening prayers in the mansion private chapel, Don Bosco returned to his prophecy. " Let us pray," said he, " for one of our friends who is dying at the Oratory." They felt that the event was hastening on. Next morning, after Mass, he had changed the intention: " Let us say a *De profundis*, my children, for your comrade who died last night." In fact, next morning, a hasty note from Don Alasonatti told Don Bosco of the unexpected death of a pupil at the Turin Oratory.

That year, there was at the Oratory a big boy of sixteen named Albert, whose conduct gave some anxiety to the Saint on more than one occasion. First of all he had been among the best of the pupils at the House; then, spoilt by one of his companions, named Felix G., he had boldly taken his place among the black sheep. Don Bosco knew it, and tried in a multitude of ways to get into touch with him. It was all to no purpose: the boy was ashamed of himself, and shunned his presence and his eyes. However, one day they both met on the stairs. The

lad turned red to the roots of his hair and dared not raise his eyes. " Why do you run away from me like this Albert? " asked Don Bosco in the most affectionate tone. " You want to go to confession, believe me, and ought to do so as soon as possible." Silence on the part of the youth. " Do you refuse? Very well; now listen carefully to this: a day will come when you will look for me and not be able to find me. Think it over well."

This short dialogue took place in November. The eve of the Exercise for a Happy Death for December, Don Bosco, after evening prayers, recommended his Sons to do the Exercise as well as possible, and added: " Before the next Exercise, one of you will die. He is present here now. A hundred times I have tried to get into touch with his soul, and have not succeeded. It is very sad for him. One day he will want to find me and will fail. But I will give him, without his knowing it, a guardian angel who will watch over him and keep him ready for the end. Soon will come the feast of the Immaculate Conception, and then there will be Christmas, two beautiful opportunities for purifying one's soul. Let him do it, poor lad, for I tell him once more he will not be here for the next Exercise for a Happy Death."

In spite of this dread warning, Albert went on living peacefully. " Don Bosco is a prophet," he thought, " but he says that the one who is going to die will be brought to him by his guardian angel, who will prepare him for the great step. Very well, it is all very simple. I won't let myself be caught; thus I shall not be the victim indicated." He kept his resolution successfully. The whole of that month Don Bosco could never manage to meet him nor to get a word with him. The feast of the Immaculate Conecption went by, and so did Christmas, and Albert, always influenced by his bad companion, refused to go to confession. On the morning of December 30, the Duchess of Montmorency-Laval called upon Don Bosco and begged him to preach the Forty Hours at Borgo.

" I would do so gladly, your Grace," replied the Saint " but this time I really cannot; important business keeps me here."

" Don Bosco, you have no right to refuse my request, since I have never refused you anything."

" But, Madame, the day after tomorrow is the day of the Exercise for a Happy Death for my community: the boys' confession and general Communion. Judge for yourself."

The great lady, thinking only of the good of the peasants at Borgo whom she wanted Don Bosco to evangelise, was inexorable, and he had to leave Turin on New Year's Eve. Before going away, he asked Don Alasonatti: " Is there no one in the infirmary? You understand, since I must be away for four days . . ."

That day, Albert received from one of his old schoolfellows, now a seminarist at Casale, a word of reproach: " Well, are you dead or alive? " he asked. " Let me know." — " There now, I will reply that I am dead," said the young fellow, and he did so with his friend's approval. They laughed at it as a good joke.

At supper, owing to his age and his height, he was asked to carry in the basket of rolls, and he helped himself freely, because the bread was quite hot. In his greed he swallowed several of them, seasoned with very salted anchovies, and then drenched them with cold water. A dreadful attack of indigestion followed, and it quickly turned into a deadly attack of peritonitis. The doctor was hastily summoned, but declared that he was powerless to stay the course of the disease. " Call for Don Bosco," cried the youth. It was six o'clock in the evening; they went to fetch him but could not find him. Then the unfortunate lad understood what his punishment was. " I shall never see Don Bosco again," he sobbed. " I fled from him, and God is punishing me by preventing him from coming to me at my last hour."

In place of Don Bosco, Don Rua ran to the rescue, and the lad made his confession with feelings of the deepest contrition. " Tell Don Bosco that I am dying fully repentant," murmured he. " I do not deserve his forgiveness, but I hope he will give it me nevertheless, as I hope for God's . . ." And seeing his bad companion, who was the real cause of his hour of bitterness, only a few feet away from his bedside, he called him with his dying breath: " Come here, Felix, come here. You know it is your fault if I die without seeing Don Bosco, but I forgive you, as I desire God's forgiveness. After death you will see my father and mother: tell them I died repentant and that I am waiting for them in paradise. But as for you . . . well, it is because of you that Don Bosco is not with me now to comfort me."

At three in the morning on New Year's day the boy died, and a few hours afterwards, at the Seminary at Casale, his friend received this strange reply: " I am dead."

Not only did Don Bosco look penetrate into the future of his questioners and discover the hour of death of his Sons; his eyes also saw through walls and ignored space; he was gifted with seeing beyond the range of vision. One day, on January 31, 1862, while he was walking with his boys under the porticoes of his House, he stopped a minute and called Father Cagliero and whispered to him: " I hear the clink of coppers. Somewhere or other, they are playing for money. Go and look for these three — (and he mentioned three names) — you will find them gambling." The Father obeyed and found the three boys engrossed in playing for money. During the previous night Don Bosco had seen them in a dream playing pitch and toss.

Another time — on a Saturday evening — to a lad who had just made his confession he said: " Please go to the loft of the apprentices' building, there you will find So-and-so smoking; call him and tell him to come to confession." The boy climbed up the three floors; the staircase was dark and he had to feel his way, but was guided by the smell of the tobacco which was very perceptible. At the entrance of the loft he stopped and, fearing reprisals, for the apprentice was a big stout fellow, merely called the offender. There was not a sound. He called him again, but there was no answer. Then he decided to go forward; the apprentice was sitting on the ground and quietly smoking. " Don Bosco is summoning you to confession." No sooner had he delivered his message then he ran away as fast as he could. Then, to see what would take place, he hid in the playground behind a dark pillar. Two minutes later the guilty lad was on his way, probably penitent, towards the sacristy where Don Bosco was waiting for him in the confessional.

During the summer holidays, in the course of which Don Bosco used to take the pupils, who had not been able to go home, to his native village, one evening one of the boys wandered away from the rest for a solitary walk through the woods. At a shady turn in the road the boy met a sinister looking fellow who made him evil proposals. At first the boy failed to understand, but soon the wretch made him see the moral danger that threatened him. And there he stood, face to face with the uncanny scamp, as it were stupefied and impotent, when a sudden call was twice repeated. " It is my anxious superintendent," thought he, and rejoicing in having such a pretext, he was off and left the villain in the lurch. When asked, the superintendent assured him that he had

never called him. Then, suspecting whence the call had come, he rejoined Don Bosco, who happened to be surrounded with a band of his boys. No sooner had he come into his presence than the Saint gave him a searching look, accompanied with a smile of satisfaction, and the lad saw that Don Bosco had followed the scene of tempation from minute to minute.

Nor had the Saint to be near his Sons to see what they were doing; sometimes he discerned them miles and miles away. One day in 1862, from Sant'Ignazio he wrote them a long letter full of affection and advice, which ends with these surprising revelations: " I have several times paid you a visit at the Oratory. There I found indeed some good, but also other things of which I cannot approve. I perceived four wolves running hither and thither among you, and more than one had been bitten by them. Perhaps I shall not find all four of them at the Oratory on my return; if only one of them remains I shall tear off the sheepskin under which he conceals himself. During another visit I paid you, at evening prayers, I saw some who remained talking on the terrace of the belfry. Others were doing the same thing on the little staircase of the new house. Father Provera routed out some on the ground floor, but he did not see those who were by the landing rails on the other floors. I also saw others slipping off on Sunday morning and losing a part of the service. But what grieved me most was to see some run away from Vespers to go bathing. Poor children! How little do they think of their souls! "

And here is something stranger still, which shows that the Saint not only had the gift of seeing a long way off, but also that of bilocation. A queer phenomenon, in virtue of which a Servant of God is in one place at a given hour, and at the same moment, by a mysterious presence, is in another miles away, where impartial witnesses see him act and hear him speak.

At that time, 1886, the Salesian College of Sarriá in Spain, the first founded in that country by Don Bosco, unfortunately contained some dangerous and scandalous boys, all the more to be feared because they concealed their activities under a cloak of hypocrisy. Outwardly, they appeared to be very good boys indeed; inwardly, they were ravening wolves. This is how four of these poor wretches were tragically unmasked and pulled up in their evil work.

" It was the night of January 28-29," relates the Director of the House, Father Branda. " I was fast asleep, when suddenly a voice which I recognised as that of Don Bosco called me by name. " Get up and follow me," it said. " Awakened by the summons, I thought: ' A queer dream. Don Bosco is at Turin, and I am at Barcelona; how then could I recognise his voice? ' "

And Father Branda fell asleep again.

A week later, at the close of the Octave of the feast of the Patron of the Salesians, St. Francis of Sales, in the night of February 5-6, he had a similar sudden awakening.

" Don Branda, Don Branda! " cried the voice.

The Director opened his eyes and saw Don Bosco at the foot of his bed.

" I see you are awake," said the latter; " so get up and follow me."

The Director got up, dressed, drew aside the curtains of the alcove and, a yard away, found Don Bosco, whose hand he kissed as a sign of respect.

" Your House is going well," then said the Saint: " I am pleased with you, but there is one dark spot . . ."

A short silence followed the pause, and suddenly Don Branda perceived four of the boarders of his House, of whom two were pupils.

" Tell this one," said Don Bosco, indicating one of the apparitions, " to be rather more prudent. As for the three others, they must be expelled. Show them no pity, and do it as soon as possible."

The order was given in a tone that admitted of no reply, says the witness; and in giving it Don Bosco wore a look of anger and severity.

The verdict given, the apparition signalled Don Branda to follow it, and one after the other Don Bosco and Branda traversed two dormitories. " I did not see Don Bosco use any key to unlock the rooms," relates Don Branda: " the doors opened of themselves before him. And a luminous halo appeared to surround him on his way, lighting up everything on his path."

On getting back to the Director's room, Don Bosco again intimated to him the order of expulsion and disappeared.

Feeling his way, and still trembling, the Director, again plunged in darkness by the departure of his visitor, tried to find the matches, lit

a candle and glanced round the room. He was quite alone, and his watch showed that it was four o'clock.

What was to be done? Should he go to bed again? In two hours' time the House would be awake. Don Branda took up his breviary and said it. Then, still shaken by what had happened, he went down to say Mass for the community, in the course of which he asked himself what he ought to do. The order was clear, but the duty was difficult to discharge. And then, might he not have been the victim of an hallucination? Besides, what proof of guilt had he to justify such extreme measures? And how was he to extract a confession from the offenders? At all events, he decided to gain time. Time is a great healer, says a Spanish proverb.

But now, within a few days, comes a letter from Turin, written by Don Rua. " As I was walking with Don Bosco today under the porticoes of the Oratory he bade me ask you whether you had carried out the order he had himself intimated to you a short time ago." Everything was now once more at stake and action must be taken.

The Director was still incredulous, and went on waiting a day or two, waving between indulgence and expulsion. He might have waited longer, had not an incident occurred which imperiously forced him to obey.

That morning he had to say Mass at Doña Chopitea's. On reaching her mansion he was greeted with this exclamation from that lady: " Oh, Don Branda, just fancy, only last night I was dreaming of Don Bosco." — " Very well, very well," replied Don Branda rather hastily, fearing to get a confirmation of Don Rua's letter; " I can't listen to you now; I have to vest myself for Mass."

And so that Mass began. " Then," says Father Branda, while I was reciting the Introibo at the foot of the altar, I felt in my innermost being an imperious voice murmuring: If you fail to carry out the order, this is your last Mass."

Don Branda hesitated no longer. As soon as he got back to the House, he summoned his disciplinary Prefect, and in his presence called up the four guilty ones who, when pressed with questions, acknowledged their fault. Strange to say, during the interrogatory, each of them unwittingly assumed the attitude in which he had appeared as an apparition on the night of February 6.

Three of them were expelled there and then.

More mysterious than the physical world of man's corporal activity is the world of souls. Now the Saint frequently read therein as in an open book. The most hermetically sealed consciences he could break into; the most deeply hidden thoughts he could drag into the light. Here are a few striking instances chosen out of thousands.

Kept back by a sense of shame, a young man would not make his general confession to Don Bosco. The Saint knew this, and one day, in a corridor, he stopped him and said to him point-blank: " My friend, go and make your confession to anyone you choose. The important thing is to make a good confession. To do that, believe me, begin from such and such a year, and above all do not forget to mention this sin or that." Confounded and upset by such a revelation, the young fellow replied: " I will go to no other priest than you; hear my confession now." Don Bosco put him off till the next day, when his troubled soul found peace once more.

Another time the apostle met with one of his pupils on the staircase, and asked him in a low voice: " When will you make a general confession? You need it so much." — " But I made it the day before yesterday to Father Picco." — " No, my child, you did it badly, because you concealed such-and-such a sin from him." The boy looked at him dumbfounded, blushed, bent down his head and burst into sobs.

At the beginning of the Valdocco boarding establishment, a young fellow who had been admitted by Don Bosco arrived fresh from Biella. Before entering, feeling his conscience somewhat uneasy, he went on his way to the church of the Consolata for confession. In the playground, at the evening recreation, seeing a group round the Saint, he drew near it. They were talking of Don Bosco's gift of being able to read the depths of men's hearts, and were telling aloud some of these revelations. " Oh," said the new comer, in an incredulous tone, " I defy Don Bosco to tell any of my sins. If he knows them he may publish them oloud." " Come here," then said the Saint; and leaning close to the young man's ear, he murmured a few words. Then he raised his head, fastened his eyes for some time upon his interlocutor, and bent down again and went on with his revelation. As he was speaking the young man blushed; at last he burst out and exclaimed: " Well, you must have heard my confession this morning at the Consolata. That is not the right way to act."

" I *don't* think! " shouted the boys all together. " Don Bosco has not left the Oratory all day."

In 1858, M. de Camburzano, ex-dupty of Nice in the Subalpine Parliament, and surnamed the Italian Montalembert, happened to be taking a country holiday at Nice.

Being a devoted friend and great benefactor of Don Bosco, he was talking about the good Father at a gathering of very distinguished people, but persons of rather superficial religious convictions.

The marvels related by M. de Camburzano raised more than one smile of incredulity, and one lady amongst others, hearing that the Saint of whom they were talking was still alive, said rather flippantly: " I should like to try an experiment; if this worthy man will be so good as to reveal to me the state of my conscience, I shall then be ready to believe anything you like."

All present greeted this with applause; they decided that the experiment should be tried, and, there and then, the lady wrote off to Don Bosco.

She had not to wait long for the following reply:

" 1. Go back to your husband;

2. Renew your confessions since . . . (a period of nearly twenty years). When you have done these two things, you can be easy in your mind."

The second of these counsels he also gave to one of his boys who asked his advice.

" What advice do you want? "

" Something for my spiritual good."

" Well, for three years you have been living in a state of mortal sin."

" How can that be? I go regularly to Don Savio for confession."

" Yet it is as I say, and you know it well."

And pursuing his reading of the boy's heart, he began to reveal the many sins he had concealed in the confessional. At each sin the lad nodded his head and, on leaving Don Bosco, promised to purify his soul before the day was over.

One boy had for some time given Don Bosco very keen anxiety; but in spite of all the affectionate tenderness bestowed upon him, his heart seemed obstinately closed to grace.

One evening he was getting into bed, when he discovered a little note under his pillow with these simple words on it:

" What if you were to die tonight? " *Don Bosco.*

The effect was not long delayed. The poor little fellow was deeply touched, and soon there was a knock at Don Bosco's door.

The Saint heard his confession, and sent him away in peace.

One evening, as he was going up to his room to get some sleep, Don Bosco stopped Father Ruffino on the stairs. " When you meet So-and-so," said he, " beg him on my behalf to translate these two Latin words: *lupus rapax* (a ravaging wolf); and to this other boy say: *olim angelus, nunc sus* (once an angel, he is now an . . . animal that eats acorns)."

Nor was it sin only that he detected in the depths of the heart; secret acts of virtue were also revealed to him. " One day," says one of his boys, " I had done an act of charity, which had cost me a good deal. God alone had witnessed it. How astonished I was to hear Don Bosco, as soon as we met, say: ' Oh, what a pearl for paradise you have won by your sacrifice! ' — ' What sacrifice? ' — ' Well, this.' And the act which I believed was known to God only, he described in full detail."

That notion that Don Bosco could read on one's forehead the secrets of one's heart was so common throught the House that those with consciences that were not very clear instinctively avoided him as much as possible. But they did not always succeed. Then they would hold their caps or their hands over their eyes to hinder his disquieting penetration. After the holidays, when they returned with hearts not yet cleansed from deviations that had taken place during such badly superintended seasons, it was curious to note how many boys quickly turned on their heels as soon as Don Bosco appeared. As he himself acknowledged, he could read everything in their faces. One evening after prayers, he said to his Sons: " God has given me the gift of discerning hypocrites. When one of them comes near me, I discover his presence by a nauseous odour which I can hardly bear." And to Don Rua and to some other Superiors of the House gathered round, he confided:

" The good God really displays his goodness with regard to my youngsters. Whenever I happen to be amidst them, if there is one impure soul in the group, I know it immediately by its evil odour." " Only give me," he said on another occasion, " a young man I have never seen;

I have merely to look him in the face to reveal to him the faults he has committed since his earliest childhood."

Hence, it was practically impossible to leave his confessional with any grave sin on one's conscience. If a boy, through distraction, forgetfulness or false shame, did not confess such-and-such a sin, the Saint would say to him: " Why don't you accuse yourself of this sin? Why do you forget such-and-such a fault? " Some of his penitents, who dared not confess grave shortcomings, or who did not know how to begin, would say to him confidentially; " Do you tell my faults; " and Don Bosco would enumerate them; the penitent had only to nod his approval. Sometimes he would take the first step: Will you tell me your faults, or shall I tell you them? " When there was a crowd around him, how often would he make a selection! He would tap some of them on the shoulder and say: " Go in peace to Communion," and he would keep back the rest. Very often he would acknowledge in all simplicity, " I see consciences in the confessional as if they were open books. That happens especially on the eves of great feasts, and at the close of retreats. At other times, I can see nothing. This facility in reading the depths of the heart is granted me by God at intervals of greater or less length." Hundreds of testimonies confirm this avowal.

Thousands of other witnesses affirm that God used to speak to this humble priest in dreams at night. " To talk of Don Bosco and not to mention his dreams," writes Father Lemoyne, his chief biographer, " would arouse a host of protests. And ' What about his dreams? ' all his old pupils would ask in surprise at such an omission." In fact, for more than sixty years, it was in this strange fashion that Heaven manifested its will to him. The first and most important of these dreams goes back to when he was only nine, and on December 8, 1887, six weeks before his death, the Blessed Virgin Mary, still in a dream, enjoined upon her servant the opening of the Salesian House at Liége.

This mode of revealing the divine mind does not astound a Christian. He remembers, in the earliest ages, Jacob's ladder and the sheaves bowing before Joseph; the nocturnal apparitions of the Angel to Mary's spouse in the first beginnings of the new dispensation; and he has read, in the Lives of the Servants of God, in that of Mother Jahouvey, for instance, or of Cardinal Lavigerie, that their destiny was often determined by some striking dream. The important thing is to test the

phenomenon, to make sure whether it is of heavenly origin. The angel of darkness is so powerful in the sphere of imagination. Men so easily slip into the region of phantasmagoria and hallucination, and thus seek some justification for their conduct. Don Bosco himself, as he tells an intimate friend, was on his guard against the strange dreams that seemed to lift the veil from the future, or to discover the depths of men's consciences to him, or to point out the way he was to go, or the method he was to follow, or to warn him of a precipice close at hand. Sometimes he treated them as being a mere play of the imagination; but sometimes, when he took them seriously and related them to his boys, he trembled at the thought that he might have led them into error. " One day, I accused myself to Don Cafasso," he admitted, " of such rash talk. After a moment's reflection, my holy confessor said to me: ' Since the event has fulfilled the dream, you can be easy in your mind, and go on doing.' "

This authoritative utterance did not always satisfy him; several times the Saint himself put his dreams to the test. After a night in which he had seen the state of all the consciences in his House, he called to him one of the young folks seen in his dream, then a second, and then a third. " Has not your soul this and that to reproach itself with? " he asked. All acknowledged that he was not mistaken, and then Don Bosco concluded that the reality corresponded with the dream.

Later on, when he had seen, not only ten times, but a hundred times, the fulfilment of what he had dreamed at night, he worried no longer: he went right on, convinced that God had chosen this means of revealing His intentions to him. His faith may be said to have consisted above all in working, striving, toiling, and in trying one means after another, to compel circumstances and men to realise some idea he had perceived during the night.

This faith of his the world admired. Calm and bold, during fifty years it carried through a giant's task, despite the obstacles which hell, religious sects, his own friends, his ecclesiastical superiors, the hardness of the times and the very greatness of the enterprise itself set in his way. He was never disturbed; he knew he would win through in the end, because he had seen the end. The victorious issue of the fight, this he had hailed in advance, when, as dawn arose, the last part of the tremendous drama was ending in triumph as he awoke. This very clear

view of the task to be achieved, this firm decision in action and gentle persistence in the face of obstruction, which so plainly characterised him, he drew them thence. " These well-known designs of God," he confessed to his first Sons one evening in confidence, " they are what have constantly urged me forwards; that is why neither adversity nor persecution nor the worst hindrances have been able to get the better of my courage."

It was about 1854 that he began to recount to his Sons, after evening prayers, under the form of an apologue, his dramatic dreams. There is no need to say with what close attention they were received, and the thrill they imparted, especially when they announced some imminent death, or revealed some secret of conscience or brought some divine warning to persevere in duty, or when they predicted political happenings. A " little word in the evening " did not always suffice for their exposition, so delicately were they varied in detail, and, as he himself acknowledged, Don Bosco did but give the main outlines of the dreams which had occupied his thoughts till the morning. We may also surmise the effect they had upon souls: hearts were purified, conduct was improved, vices were checked, and the grace of God ruled in the House, in which a father's eye might discover, from one moment to another, the most hidden taint.

A large portion of these dreams, perhaps the most interesting part of them, had to do with the destiny of the Saint and with the future of his Congregation. At the age of nine, he learnt in one of his dreams the mission God would entrust him with; at sixteen, in a further dream, he came to know that Heaven would provide him with the means that were indispensable for its fulfilment; at nineteen, a mysterious voice warned him that he had no right to withdraw from God's designs; at twenty-one, he saw, through another nocturnal revelation, that it was for the poor and neglected little ones that his charity and impatient zeal were reserved; and at twenty-two, he saw clearly that Turin was to be the first scene of his apostolate.

Another time, but later on, in 1861, he was himself in a dream in a square of the town, in which a mysterious being was turning a huge wheel, each turn of which, he said, represented ten years in the history of his Oratory. At the first turn it seemed to Don Bosco that the noise made by the turning of this strange machine was audible only to himself

and a few others; at the second turn, it was heard by the whole of Piedmont; at the third, by all Italy; at the fourth, by Europe; and at the fifth, by the whole world. The prophecy was clear, and Heaven was showing Don Bosco that his Oratory, like the Church of God, was called to spread over all the continents of the earth.

Here is another of these dreams, which in one sense is all the more typical because it is not at all symbolical. One night Don Bosco dreamed that he was offered a sumptuous villa at Marseilles in France. He saw it in its smallest details, and wrote of it to his friends in that town, describing the villa and begging them to find it. They thought he was mad, but nevertheless searched for it just to oblige him. They could not discover any property corresponding in any way with his description. A few years afterwards, in 1885, the rector of St. Joseph's, of Marseilles, was walking with Don Bosco in the outskirts of the town and, in passing near St. Margaret's, pointed out a house belonging to one of his benefactresses. He showed it to Don Bosco as he might have shown him any other house belonging to any other person whose name he knew. The property was shut up, and from where they stood it was impossible to see the shape of the garden. Don Bosco pulls up and his expression suddenly changes. Then he exclaims with the greatest delight: " Here it is! That is the very place. Behind that doorway there is a great semicircular avenue of plane trees; it ends at two massive pillars with two lions over them; to the left there is a farm, then a stream and a splendid oak: it is the property I saw in my dream, praise the Lord! " All these details were correct; and the building was in fact handed over to him for the establishment of his Oratory in it.

Shortly before his death, on December 7, 1887, the Salesian House in Turin had the honour of entertaining Mgr. Doutreloux, the Bishop of Liége, who had come on purpose to secure a Salesian foundation in his cathedral city. The High Council of the Society, gathered round Don Bosco on the night of the prelate's arrival, could only suggest a postponement *sine die*. But next day, December 8, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, to the great surprise of everyone, Don Bosco promised his distinguished visitor that the Salesians would go to Liége. Why was there such a sudden change within a few hours? A divine message had been received, as appears from the following lines dictated by Don Bosco to his secretary: " The Virgin Mary Immaculate has

appeared to me tonight, and this is what she said to me, word for word: ' It is God's good pleasure and his Mother's that the Sons of St. Francis de Sales should open a House at Liége in honour of the Blessed Sacrament. It was in this city that the first public honours were paid to the Holy Eucharist; it is from this city that thy Sons will spread to propagate the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament in their families, and particularly amongst the young who will be entrusted to their care.' "

As we see, it was at every step that Heaven used to intervene to indicate his way to the Saint. How often, on calm nights before retiring to bed would he pause on the balcony outside his room facing the Church over which rose the statue of the Lady of his dreams, Mary Help or Christians. The day of work was over, at any rate for his Sons. They were all asleep . . . A great silence reigned . . . One by one the lights in the windows were going out. Overhead the dark blue sky was sparkling with stars. . . . A dim light hovered above the great slumbering town close by. The church bells chimed out the hours one after another through the clear night . . . And he, gazing at the Virgin, who was watching over his world of sleeping children, breathed forth a silent prayer to her to whom he had only had to listen to achieve great things in this world.

The Wonder-Worker

A few years before he died, they asked St. Vincent Ferrer how many miracles he had worked. "About three thousand," he replied. The inquiry for his canonisation made a careful examination of them, and they were so tired out that they came to a stop at the eight hundred and seventy-third. If the same question had been put to Saint John Bosco, he would have surely replied, with the same simplicity as the famous Dominican, with an amazing figure. The miracles wrought in answer to his prayers were indeed innumerable. After going through the testimony borne by his Sons, his pupils and by contemporary witnesses, one must agree that death, life, the devil, disease and nature proved docile to his commands. There was no greater *thaumaturgus* in the nineteenth century, if he were not the greatest. In the preceding chapters we have already given a considerable number of extraordinary occurrences, inexplicable by natural law. And here are others selected out of multitudes, and wrought on behalf of all classes and conditions, and under more than one sky. They prove that Don Bosco was a man sent by God on a providential mission; these miracles both accredited and facilitated his work. Could this humble priest have accomplished his tremendous undertakings within half a century had he not been able to win over to his plans, besides the wondering crowds, the hearts of those whom he restored to health and happiness and life? It is not only the Basilica of Our Lady, Help of Christians, that was built with the help of miracles, but the whole of the great educator and apostle's enterprise.

Nevertheless, he would have been much astonished had anyone attributed to him the marvellous gift of having authority to command

the forces of nature. It was not he who acted, he thought quite sincerely, but Our Blessed Lady. He invited people to pray to her, gave them her blessing, distributed her medal among them, it was she who wrought the wonders. He said this plainly at a meeting of the Old Boys, held at Valsalice on July 19, 1883, towards the close of his life: " For the last ten years a report has been spreading, and the newspapers publish it, that Don Bosco works miracles. What a mistake! Don Bosco does not work miracles. He prays himself and gets others to pray for those who recommend themselves to him; and that is all. As for miracles, it is the Blessed Virgin who works them. She sees Don Bosco needs money to feed and bring up his thousands of children as Christians; then she brings him benefactors by the favours she showers upon them." At most, when pressed with urgent questions, he would admit now and then that they worked together, the Virgin and he. But the crowd made no mistake. They knew that, if the mediatorial omnipotence of Mary could obtain innumerable favours from the love of God, Don Bosco's credit with his Mother was very great, and they largely drew upon it.

A touching and singular episode was the instantaneous cure wrought the day after the consecration of the church of Our Lady, Help of Christians, on June 10, 1868. A poor paralytic woman had had herself borne to the church in a wretched conveyance drawn by a donkey. On coming close to it, the ambulance had had to pull up; the crowd was too thick. The driver tried hard to break through, but in vain. Then the invalid saw Don Bosco surrounded with the faithful begging his blessing, and could not be held back; so she stood up and got out of the cart and drew near the Saint, and only then discovered she was cured. A wild cry of joy broke from her lips. Her parents who were there were struck dumb with fear at the sight, and wept with emotion and tried to lead her away. But she went on shouting: " I am cured, I am cured." " Well, we can see that clearly," they answered, " come along." " No," replied the woman who was cured, " I want to go and thank the Virgin for her favour."

And, pushed on by the crowd, she went into the church.

One Sunday evening in May, 1869, a young girl, with her eyes bound up under a thick black bandage, and led by two other women, entered the church of Our Lady, Help of Christians, at Turin. Her name was Maria Stardero, from the village of Vinovo, and for two years

she had been so violently affected in her eyes that she had lost her sight. She could not find her way alone; her aunt and a neighbour accompanied her on the pilgrimage she had undertaken.

After saying a prayer at the altar of the Blessed Virgin, they asked to speak to Don Bosco, and the following conversation took place in the sacristy.

" How long have your eyes been affected? "

" A long time; it is a year since I was able to see." And " We have tried all sorts of remedies," put in her aunt, " but none of them has been of the least use. The doctors say that her eyes are ruined. They give us no hope."

She began to cry.

" Can you distinguish big things from small? "

" I cannot make out anything at all," said Maria.

" Take off your bandage," said Don Bosco, setting the young girl opposite a well lighted window: " Do you see the light from this window? "

" I see nothing at all."

" Do you wish to see? "

" Why do you ask? I desire it more than anything else in the world."

" Will you use your eyes for the good of your soul, and never to offend God? "

" I promise that with all my heart."

" Have confidence in the Blessed Virgin, and she will help you. Now, tell me what I have in my hand."

The girl made a great effort with her eyes, and fastening them on what was before her, cried out: " I see."

" What? "

" A medal of the Blessed Virgin."

" And on the other side of the medal? "

" On that side is an old man with a flowering rod in his hand; it is St. Joseph."

At that moment she stretched out her hand to take the medal, but it fell into a dark corner. Her aunt stooped down to pick it up, but Don Bosco stopped her. " Let her alone; we shall then see whether the Blessed Virgin has really restored her sight."

The young girl found the medal at once, and that without difficulty.

Then she broke forth into delirious cries of joy, and, without speaking to anyone or even thinking of thanking God, she hastily set off to Vinovo, followed by her aunt and the friend who was with her. But she soon returned to give thanks to the Blessed Virgin, and did not forget to make an offering to her church. Her gratitude went even further than that, for in a few years' time she became a Sister of Mary Help of Christians.

A doctor, highly esteemed by his patients, one day presented himself at the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales at Turin, and asked to see Don Bosco.

" They say you cure all kinds of diseases."

" I! Nothing of the sort."

" Well, they have told me so, giving me the names of the sufferers and the description of their illnesses."

" Many come here to pray for graces through the intercession of Our Lady, Help of Christians. If they make a triduum or a novena and are then cured, I have nothing to do with it; the grace is solely due to the Blessed Virgin."

" Very well, let her cure me, too; and then I will believe in her miracles."

" And what is your malady? "

The doctor said he was suffering from epilepsy, and that during the last year the attacks had become so serious that he could not go out without a companion for fear of an accident. Nothing had given him any relief, and he had therefore, in his despair, come to seek for a cure in that place, as so many others had done.

" Then, do the same as the others; kneel down and say some prayers with me; prepare for confession and Communion, and the Blessed Virgin will console you."

" Bid me do something else, for that I cannot do."

" Why not? "

" I should be a hyprocrite; for I believe neither in God nor in the Blessed Virgin, neither in prayer nor in miracles."

At first Don Bosco was taken aback; but his inspired tones proved so affecting that the doctor knelt down and crossed himself.

" I am astonished at being able to do it," said he, " for it is forty years since I have done such a thing."

He prayed and ended by making his confession.

Immediately afterwards, he felt as if he were inwardly cured. He never had the slightest recurrence of his illness; and he often came to give thanks to Our Lady, Help of Christians, who had cured him both in body and soul.

A general at Turin was attacked by a complaint which had reduced him to the last extremity. He had made his confession to Don Bosco, who, to the surprise of the family, had not given Holy Communion to the sick man, although the doctors had pronounced their patient's state extremely dangerous. It was May 22. " General," said Don Bosco, the day after tomorrow we shall be celebrating the feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians; pray well, and in gratitude for your cure come that day for Holy Communion to her church." On the 23rd, the general grew worse; death seemed to be close at hand. They would not have him leave this world for a better one without fortifying him with all the sacraments; but the family was in a state of great embarrassment; for Don Bosco had recommended that Extreme Unction should not be given in his absence. So they hurried off at eight o'clock at night to warn him of the great danger in which the sick man now was, and to tell him they feared the patient would not live through the night.

That day, being the eve of a feast so dear to the Salesian Society, Don Bosco had been in the confessional from early in the morning, and when they came to fetch him he was surrounded with a number of boys who were waiting for him in turn.

" Come quickly, Father, the general is dying, and you have only just time enough to reach him."

" But you can see I am busy in the confessional; I cannot send these poor little ones away. I will go as soon as I am free."

So he went on; and it was eleven o'clock before he had finished.

They were waiting for him at the door with a carriage.

" Quick, Father, please . . ."

" All right," said Don Bosco; " only I have had nothing since this morning, and I feel utterly exhausted. If I can't get any supper before midnight, I shall be going without food that I really need; for tomorrow I must be in the confessional at five o'clock in the morning."

" Come, all the same, Father; you will find all you need in the house."

As soon as they reached the general's house, the family still urged the immediate administration of the last sacraments.

" O men of little faith! " said Don Bosco, " did I not tell you the general would make his Communion tomorrow, on the feast of Mary, Help of Christians? It is almost midnight; please get me some supper? "

Don Bosco then sat at table with his invariable tranquillity; and after a light meal returned to the Oratory. As for the general, they thougth he was dead, for he seemed utterly motionless; but he was just asleep.

Very early next morning he begged his son to send for his clothes, because he wanted to go and receive Holy Communion from Don Bosco, as had been agreed.

A little before eight o'clock, Don Bosco was in the sacristy preparing for Mass, when a rather untidy person came in:

" Hullo, Father, here I am."

" Very well, my dear Sir; but excuse me if I ask: Whom have I the honour of addressing? "

" What, don't you recognise the general? "

" Ah! praised be Our Lady, Help of Christians. Indeed I told you, you would come to her church on her feast day."

" Father, would you be so good as to hear my confession? "

" But I heard your confession the day before yesterday; and that is enough."

" By no means. At any rate I wish to accuse myself of the want of faith of which I own I was guilty."

The Saint confessed him and gave him Communion at his Mass, and restored him to his family full of life.

At Rome in January, 1867, Don Bosco was the guest of the De Maistre family. One of the children of Count Eugéne, little Paul, aged nearly eighteen months, was suffering terribly with a dangerous abscess ir the throat. Every moment they were dreading that it would degenerate into a general infection of the blood. An operation was indispensable; but where was it to be applied? The surgeons were hesitating, so general had the inflammation become. On the morning of the 16th, the Saint, before going to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice for the sufferer at St. Charles's, blessed him and applied the medal of Our Lady, Help of Christians. to the diseased spot. On returning from Mass, a per-

ceptible improvement had occurred; the abscess was coming to a head rapidly and was offering itself, so to speak, to the surgeon's instrument. The operation took place, and the child was immediately relieved and soon became convalescent. " Your little one cannot die," said the Saint, after blessing him, " for it is God's will that he should be a priest." His parents kept the prediction secret until the day when their child was ordained a priest. Father Paul De Maistre is today the Superior of the Jesuit House at Bastia.

This healing of a child recalls another which had its day of renown at Marseilles in January, 1879. The Saint was lamenting because he noticed that for some months the Oratory he had founded there had not succeeded in becoming firmly rooted. Just then a woman came to him from the other end of Marseilles and, drawing his attention to her child who was crippled and dragging himself along on crutches, begged him to cure the boy. Don Bosco was deeply touched by the distress of the poor mother and earnestly prayed to Our Lady, Help of Christians, and then blessed the child in the Virgin's name and smilingly gave him a medal. Immediately the paralysed limbs began to shake, the legs to straighten, and then the boy threw away his crutches and ran off.

The fame of this miracle spread all over Marseilles, and all the good-wills lost their numbness and the Oratory took a start which nothing afterwards could check.

Six months later Don Bosco was asked by some of his most intimate friends how the miracle had come to pass. He told them that he had said to the Madonna confidentially: " Let us make a start."

And here is another case of a little Marseilles boy who owed his instantaneous recovery to Don Bosco, as Don Rua and Don Berto both bore witness. His father and mother had taken him to Rome, hoping that the blessing of Pius IX might work a miracle. But the good Pope had met them with a refusal. " Go and see Don Bosco at Turin," said he; " he has just wrought some astonishing cures there; who can tell whether he may not cure your child? " And the parents set out for Turin with their little one. The poor invalid, who was about five, could not stand on his feet, and could neither hear nor say a word. On seeing the afflicted child Don Bosco was deeply moved; he invoked the Blessed Virgin and blessed him. Then, taking him by the hand, with a look he invited him to walk. Thereupon the little fellow made a start and

walked with a firm step. Next Don Bosco went behind him and clapped his hands loudly; and the child turned round, for he had heard. One thing only remained to be done to make the miracle complete. " Come," said the Saint in a very gentle tone, " say, Dad, Mummy," and at once the child repeated the loving words. Who can tell the joy of the parents at the wonderful miracle? They went to thank Our Lady, Help of Christians, in her church.

The three marvellous episodes now to be told seem to belong to the days of *The Golden legend*. They may make some agnostics smile; yet each of them had witnesses whom we ourselves know well and have interrogated, witnesses who have given sworn testimony to the truth of these strange occurrences.

" A freshman " at the Turin Oratory, after a month of the community life, wrote to his mother that he could never get used to it. He ended up with: " Come and fetch me away."

His mother came and everything was arranged for his departure. The morning the lad was to go, he wished to make his confession for the last time to Don Bosco; but there were many penitents, and the youth's turn came only after Mass. It was just breakfast time. Young Dalmazzo — for that was the boy's name — was about to begin his confession when one of his companions, who belonged to the food service department, came and whispered to Don Bosco: " There is no bread for breakfast."

" That's impossible. Have a good look. Ask So-and-so. It is his job; and he can't be far off."

Soon the messenger returned, having drawn a blank.

" Don Bosco, we have rummaged in every corner and have found but a few rolls."

Don Bosco appeared to be astonished.

" Then run and tell the baker to bring what we want."

" The baker! that's no good. We owe him nearly five hundred pounds; he won't let us have another bit of bread till he is paid."

" Very well: in that case, put what you have found into a basket; God will send the rest. I will myself come at once and hand it round."

Young Dalmazzo had heard every word and was specially struck with Don Bosco's last words; and when he saw the latter get up he followed him with a very natural curiosity, which was all the more keen

because he had lately heard a good deal of talk of marvels wrought at the Oratory by Don Bosco.

The boy therefore waited behind Don Bosco, and carefully counted the rolls in the basket. There were fifteen. But three hundred hearty lads were waiting for breakfast, and no dainty appetites among them, we may well suppose.

Fifteen amongst three hundred! Three hundred for fifteen! Fancy! thought the boy, and he could not make it out.

The procession began. Each lad comes in turn and takes his roll. The youngster, quite engrossed, was looking on with his eyes wide open. Don Bosco was smiling and sending no one away empty handed. When the last had been helped, young Dalmazzo counted what remained in the basket: exactly fifteen rolls. Topsy-turvy arithmetic; division turning into multiplication.

But whatever Dalmazzo might make of it, he told his mother he certainly would not leave the Oratory. This boy became a priest, and was afterwards the first rector of the Salesian parish of the Sacred Heart in Rome: he died when Superior of the Major Seminary of Catanzaro, and was always a Salesian.

In the closing years of his life the Saint was accustomed to assemble the students in their final course of the humanities once a week for a short conference. On January 1, 1886, these youths, at the end of the talk, offered Don Bosco their new year's good wishes. There were about thirty-five of them, one of the last surviving witnesses of the scene, Father Saluzzo, has told us, Don Bosco, after having heard and thanked them, added: " My dear boys, I wish I had something to give you."

As he said this, he was looking round him, when he noticed on the table a little paper bag with some nuts in it. He began immediately taking them out by the handful, and gave a whole fistful to the student next to him. The others began to smile; it was plain that, if he proceeded on the same liberal scale, there would not be more than enough nuts for two or three of them. But to their great surprise the distribution went on, and all of them received as many as they could hold in both hands joined together.

When all had been provided for, some one told Don Bosco that three or four students were away, and that they would much regret

not having had their share. He at once dipped his hand again into the bag, and drew several handfuls out of it.

One of those who were present at the strange scene afterwards remarked: " Whence he fished them out I cannot tell; the bag was quite empty."

These extraordinary increases occurred, not only to assuage bodily hunger, but even the Eucharistic yearning of his children: witness the following occurrence which is still famous in the annals of the House.

It was on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, and the children gathered around the altar for Holy Mass were about six hundred. Six hundred in church on such a day would mean nearly six hundred communicants in any Salesian House. Unfortunately, the only ciborium in the tabernacle was almost empty: it contained from fifteen to twenty wafers at most. The sacristan knew this; he had even prepared a second ciborium for consecration, but at the last moment, some distraction had made him leave it in the sacristy. He remembered it too late, after the elevation; he could do nothing but await the painful surprise of the Saint, and his fatherly rebuke after Mass. In fact, at the moment of Communion, when Don Bosco uncovered the ciborium and perceived the misfortune, his expression plainly showed his distress. Grieved at not being able to communicate all his children, he raised his eyes heavenwards in mute supplication, and descended to distribute the Eucharist to the first row of kneeling communicants. But these were followed by others, and these again by others; one row succeeded another, and still the ciborium was not exhausted. When Don Bosco returned to the altar all the boys had communicated, and the Eucharist still remained at the bottom of the sacred vessel. The sacristan could not understand it.

Let us close this account of gracious miracles and complete this triptych, which might tempt the brush of a Franciscan painter, with a charming episode wherein we see God setting his power at the service of paternal affection to relieve the embarrassment of a little child.

In 1880 Don Bosco happened to be in a Salesian House in the south of France. On this occasion the Director had prepared a little festival, and invited the Co-operators of the neighbourhood. The programme included a play, in which tiny artists, all pupils of the House, were to take the various parts.

Then, at the last moment, the Director had to tell Don Bosco that the leading actor had utterly lost his voice; a misfortune all the more vexatious because those invited were expected to turn up in large numbers. Don Bosco reflected awhile, and then asked to see the child who had just arrived and wanted to receive his blessing.

Don Bosco blessed him and said kindly: " Leave everything to me: I am going to lend you my voice, and you will be able to play your part all right."

And thereupon the little fellow recovered his voice. Don Bosco himself was seized with a sudden fit of hoarseness, which compelled him to remain entirely silent. Thanks to this exchange, the play went off to everyone's satisfaction; and after it was over each of them recovered his voice, just as if nothing had happened.

Let us close this chapter with a narrative which, however extraordinary, we must accept on the strength of the testimonies that corroborate it.

Among the boys who attended Don Bosco's first Oratory in 1849 there was a youth of fifteen. He was Charles X., the son of a neighbouring inkeeper. During a prolonged absence of the Saint, he fell seriously ill, and was soon reduced to the last extremity. " It is time to think of the sacraments," said the doctor. For his last confession, the boy asked them to call in Don Bosco. They ran to the Oratory, but the Saint was not back; so they had to have recourse to the good offices of the parish priest, who administered the sacraments to the dying boy. Next day he had passed away. His last hours had been very disturbed; he was constantly calling for Don Bosco to come to his bedside.

When the Saint returned to Turin he was at once told of the boy's anxiety to see him. I must go to his home, thought Don Bosco; perhaps I shall yet be in time. At the lad's home he ran into a servant, who said to him: " You are too late, Father. He died six hours ago." " Come now," replied Don Bosco, " he is only asleep." The man looked at him ironically, as much as to say: " Whom do you take us for? " But Don Bosco said with a smile: " What will you lay that he is not dead? "

At this moment his parents arrived in tears and confirmed the sad news. The Saint entered into the death chamber, where the deceased boy's mother and aunt were praying at his feet. A candle was burning at the head of the bed; and the boy was shrouded, according to the

custom of those days, in a plain sheet, and his face was covered with a muslin veil.

On entering the room the Saint waved aside the people who had received him. When close to the bed he was assailed with a doubt: " Who can say whether his last confession was a good one? " Then, pouring out his heart in the most fervent of prayers, he blessed the corpse, and twice called out: " Charles, Charles, arise! "

At this cry the corpse appeared to tremble. With a sudden gesture Don Bosco tore the shroud aside and uncovered the face. " How strangely they have arranged me," said the lad, whose wide-open eyes appeared to have awakened from a deep sleep. Then he raised himself up, looked around him and, seeing his spiritual Father, cried out: " Oh, Don Bosco! If you only knew! How I have called for you. It is God who has sent you. You did well to wake me up."

" Speak, Charles," murmured the Saint, " say everything you want to say; I am here for you only."

Then the boy went on: " Now I believe I ought to be in the place of eternal torment. At my last confession I never told of a sin I had committed a few weeks before. A bad companion made me do it by what he said. I've just had a dream; I thought I was on the edge of a fiery furnace, pursued by a pack of demons who wanted to catch me. And they were about to do it, when a noble looking lady came between me and their fury. ' Let him alone,' said she: ' he has not yet been judged.' At these words a mad anguish seized me; but just then I heard your call and woke up. And now, Father, hear my confession.

At a sign from Don Bosco, his mother and aunt, petrified with terror at the spectacle, left the room for a while. When they returned with the family the confession was over. " Don Bosco is saving me from hell," murmured the lad.

He lived two hours longer, fully conscious, but with his limbs like marble. At one moment the Saint said to him: " Now you are in the state of grace, you are sure of your salvation. Would you like to stay with us or go over yonder? "

" I want to go to heaven," answered the boy.

" Farewell, till we see you again in paradise," murmured Don Bosco.

As if he were only waiting for this leave taking, the lad bowed his

head down upon the pillow, closed his eyes, and resumed his immobitity; this time he had fallen asleep in the Lord.

This wonderful event was often related by the Saint at first to the boys of the Oratory and afterwards to the boys of the Salesian Houses which he visited. He always told it impersonally, as if it had happened to someone else. The precision of detail, the invariable indentity of time, place words, and the vivid tone of the description made one nevertheless suspect that the narrator of the prodigy was also its hero. And one day Don Bosco betrayed himself. Speaking one evening in 1882, after prayers, to the pupils of the Salesian College of Borgo San Martino, he suddenly stopped using the third person, and his hearers caught the words: " *I* entered the room, *I* said to him, he answered *me* . . ." But soon, pulling himself up, he continued the story in the same objective manner as he had begun it. But he had said too much for anyone to doubt thereafter that his word had one day been potent enough to recall from the gates of death one of his children when in danger of damnation.

This marvellous power, which enabled the Saint to bear sway over sickness, hell and death, was far from lifting him up; rather did he appear to be crushed by the weight of it. He made use of it because he had to do so, in order to proclaim the glory of Mary, Help of Christians, and also in order to live; but how often did he wish to be relieved of it. An avowal which he once made is a confirmation of this opinion. One of his Sons, Father Trione, returning from a mission he had been preaching in the outskirts of Turin, came to tell Don Bosco how the affair had gone off. And the Saint, as if by way of felicitation, said to him: " I am only thinking of one thing: how would you like me to get you the gift of working miracles? "

" Oh! I should indeed be glad to have it, Don Bosco," replied the preacher. " Then I should be sure of easily converting the most hardened sinners."

" Hold your peace," said Don Bosco, looking grave and reflective, " if you had the gift, you would soon be begging Heaven with tears to take it away."

The Servant of Popes

Amongst the many audiences granted to Don Bosco by Pius IX, at one held in 1875 the good Pope was asked by the Servant of God for instructions to hand on to his religious and children. Pius IX thought a moment and then said: " Tell them all to be obedient and faithful to the Vicar of Christ."

" How beautiful that fits in! " was Don Bosco's immediate rejoiner. " Look, Holy Father: before leaving you I have only one thing left to say, and I have put it down along with a few others on this scrap of paper. Read this."

And Pius IX read: " At the audience, assure His Holiness of the obedience and fidelity of all the Salesians and their pupils."

" What a happy coincidence! " exclaimed the Pope.

Obedience and fidelity to the Vicar of Christ, these were two of the great virtues that the Saint all his life long did his best to inculcate upon all his Sons. We may say that the whole of his apostolate falls between two touching episodes which prove his devotion to the Apostolic See.

On November 15, 1848, Pius IX's Prime Minister, Rossi, was foully stabbed, and revolutionary gangs made an assault on the Pope's palace. Pius IX's secretary, Mgr. Palma, had just fallen with a bullet through his forehead. The danger was more than menacing; at any moment the revolution might lay its hands upon the person of the Sovereign Pontiff; it was urgent to make some decision. On the night of November 23, accompanied by a single servant, Pius IX left the Quirinal by a secret door, and entrusted himself to the loyalty of the Bavarian ambassador, who was waiting for him in a closed carriage near

at hand. A few hours later the Pope was on the soil of the kingdom of Naples, and Ferdinand II had placed at his disposition the town and castle of Gaeta. He had to stay there six months. This forced exile evoked the sympathy of the Catholic world and made them wish to help towards the maintenance of the Father of the faithful. The Institution of *Peter's Pence* dates from that year. Subscriptions began almost everywhere. At Turin, the committee formed to collect offerings was not a little surprised on seeing that Don Bosco's Oratory had sent in the modest, and yet marvellous sum of thirty-three francs. The poor boys who, as we have seen, used to get from their Father a few halfpence to suppliment their soup or porridge, had saved out of their poverty and gathered together that sum in a few days as their mite for Pope Pius IX, for which he, with tears of gratitude, sent his Nuncio at the Court of Turin to thank them soon afterwards.

This happened quite at the beginning of Don Bosco's apostolate. And this is what took place on his deathbed, on December 23, 1887. His Archbishop, Cardinal Alimonda, was at his bedside, and Don Bosco murmured in his ear: "Hard times, your Eminence . . . I have been through hard times . . . But the Pope's authority . . . The Pope's authority . . . I have told Mgr. Cagliero, here, to let the Holy Father know this: the Salesians stand for the defence of the Pope's authority wherever they are working."

This life which at its close, gloried in having served the Vicar of Christ well on earth, ran its course through two pontificates, that of Pius IX and that of Leo XIII. Don Bosco came into touch with Pius IX for the first time in 1858. He went to Rome in the spring of that year to lay the first foundations of the canonical erection of his Congregation. The Pope knew him only by reputation. He wanted to put to the proof the moral worth of the man whom Turin already regarded as an apostle. Through Mgr. de Merode he had him invited to preach the annual retreat to the convicts in the political prison of the Thermae of Diocletian. The Saint accepted the invitation, and his simple words, so full of doctrine and examples, moved the hearts of these poor fellows; and the success of his preaching was considerable. The good Pope congratulated himself upon it a few days later and, in proof of his satisfaction, wanted to honour him with the title of Monsignor at a second audience. This tempting offer made the Servant of God recoil.

" Oh! Holy Father, please keep the honour for those who are worthier of it. A fine figure I should cut amongst my urchins with a purple stock! The little fellows would not know me; I should lose all their confidence. And then, the benefactors of my Oratory would think I had become rich; I should no longer dare to hold out my hat for the children. No, Holy Father, you must really give up your idea. Let me remain poor Don Bosco." The second proof was as conclusive as the first, and at the benediction which, before leaving Rome, Don Bosco and Don Rua received from Pius IX, they saw that henceforth, at the Vatican the Salesian Oratory could count on a great friend.

This friendship for twenty years never ceased pouring out its benefits upon Don Bosco and his undertakings. Pius IX was generous in his counsels, favours, benefactions and confidence. Here are facts that prove it plainly.

We have already seen him helping with his wisdom and intervention, not only in the birth, but in the growth and final establishment of the two Salesian Congregations. In 1876, when there was a question of his sanctioning with his approbation the Association of Salesian Co-operators, Pius IX's advice was again urgent in favour of widening the scope of that Pious Union. " Why do you think only of the stronger sex? " he asked. " Do not exclude anyone; you want women Co-operators too. Women have always played an important part in works of charity, in the Church, and in the conversion of nations. More than men are they given to self-sacrifice and activity. Do not deprive yourself of their precious assistance." And the Saint opened the ranks to the other half of the human race; he had no reason to repent of it. On another occasion, in conceding him various indults. Pius IX emphasised the practical significance of one of them: " Yes, busy your novices, during their year of trial, in various occupations, but let them not be restricted to sacristy work, for that might give them a taste for idleness. Find them active employment, specially in teaching children the catechism."

How many indulgences, favours and privileges did the good Pope heap upon Don Bosco, from the plenary indulgence which, from 1858, he granted for the last hour of two hundred of his benefactors, down to the numberless favours with which, in 1876, he enriched the Union of Co-operators. His benediction was secured for every new enterprise inaugurated by the apostle: the building of a church, the starting of an

The Mother House of the Salesians as it is today. This is where Don Bosco began his work in the Pinardi shed.

association for late vocations, the launching of a mission. From his first meeting with the Servant of God, he granted him the faculty of hearing confessions *in omni loco Ecclesiae* and, without his asking for it, a dispensation from saying the Breviary on days of heavy work.

Nor was he less munificent with regard to his friend's destitution. At his first leave taking audience with Don Bosco, he poured into the outstretched hands of the Founder a handful of gold coins to pay for a supper for his young friends at Turin. For the building of the church of Our Lady, Help of Christians, he sent five hundred francs, and two thousand for the church of St. John the Evangelist. At the second departure of the Salesian missionaries, he took five thousand francs from his drawer, and added another thousand to them in gold. Lastly, one day when he felt that Don Bosco was hard driven by urgent needs, he gave him nearly a thousand pounds all at once from his privy purse.

These were tokens of kindness, but they did not equal the marks of esteem and confidence with which he honoured his loyal devotion. Today he entrusted him with an extremely delicate mission: to ascertain whether the Roman clergy were imparting Christian teaching regularly; tomorrow, and on two occasions, he welcomed him gladly as the plenipotentiary charged by the Government with settling, between the two powers, the thorny question of making nominations to a hundred and eight vacant sees; a few days later, he begged him to collaborate in drawing up lists of candidates for the episcopate, and all the names he proposed were accepted; another time, he entrusted him with the reformation of a Rome institution which he wished to incorporate in the Salesian Society. Twelve times, under Pius IX, Don Bosco had to go to Rome, and on each occasion the Pope gave him unequivocal tokens of an esteem calculated to kindle envy, to the point of driving him home in the papal carriage, to the point of receiving him in his own room when ill. What a touching recollection the Saint kept of the paternal audience he was given in 1877! " Fancy," he said to his secretary as they went down the stairs of the Vatican, " the Holy Father receiving me in bed! Had you only seen his bed! It was as low and poor as our boys'. Not a rag of carpet anywhere for his feet. The room is paved with worn-out bricks, and you have to look carefully not to trip up. Pius IX knows I am short-sighted, and told me where to step to reach him: ' Not that way, Don Bosco, there is a hole that way; this way.'

Dear me! what an example of poverty the Head of the Church sets us! What a spectacle the highest authority in the world presents in his chosen penury! "

Why did Pius IX show such special friendliness to the apostle of Turin? Because he had at once divined what a man he was, and felt what a devoted servant the Church could count upon in him.

Don Bosco displayed that devotion in innumerable ways throughout his life. As editor of the series of *Catholic Readings*, his *Lives of the Popes* always had the first claim upon his pen. Apart from that series, in eight issues, under the title of *Lives of the Popes in the First Centuries*, he wrote biographies of twenty-one Popes of the early Church. In 1847, he supplemented these with a *History of the Church*, intended to teach young Catholics the civilising power of the Papacy.

In November, 1859, just after the revolt of the Pontifical Legations, and after their going over to the House of Savoy, Don Bosco, grieved by this grave violation of the temporal power of the Pope, addressed a letter to Pius IX, expressing his deep sorrow as a Catholic priest and trying to comfort him by setting forth all the good the Church was achieving in Piedmont in various fields during those troubled times. In January, 1860, the Pope replied in a Brief overflowing with paternal sentiments. This was more than enough to fire the train; all the more so because the April issue of *Catholic Readings* contained a translation of the Pope's letter. From that, to infer that Don Bosco's House was a seat of conspiracy, and that it concealed people in secret relationship with the exiled Archbishop, the Pope and the Jesuits, was but a short step. It was very quickly taken, and on May 26 and June 9 of that year the Salesian Oratory was subjected to an official investigation which lasted seven hours. Nothing was overlooked: the House was surrounded with soldiers, the boys were isolated from their masters by the police, there was a minute search into every corner, the smallest scrap of paper was carefully read, even fragments in the wastepaper basket; in fine, a regular domiciliary visitation. Of course nothing was discovered, except a rather too clerical sentence — by Marcus Aurelius — and the translation of the Pope's famous letter. The police got nothing for their pains: the sole result of this vexatious procedure was that it provided Don Bosco with an opportunity of suffering something for his master and benefactor, Pius IX.

Don Bosco suffered much more from seeing the desolate state of the Italian dioceses during many years. Forty-five Bishops of the Peninsula were then in exile; eighteen, elected by the Pope, were refused the right of entry into their dioceses; many of the Bishops were dead, and could not be replaced. In Piedmont, no nomination had been made for fifteen years. In our next chapter we shall see the Servant of God trying to induce the ruling authorities to put an end to this spiritually harmful state of things. Here we record the devotion he brought to the fulfilment of his duty as a liaison agent between the Vatican and the Quirinal. How many steps and endeavours, how many hours of waiting and discussion, this work entailed upon him! At Rome, in 1871, he seemed at one time to be the only person always to be found in the ministerial offices or at the Vatican chancellory. Then, by the Pope's orders, he had to collaborate in drawing up lists of future Bishops. How gladly would he have been dispensed from such a fearsome honour! But Pius IX had plainly shown his desire, and that was for his subject a command.

From December 8, 1869, when the Vatican Council opened its sessions, Don Bosco felt that, on the border of this great assembly, he might perhaps play a modest role in the historic debates which were to issue in the proclamation of the Dogma of Papal Infallibility. He therefore left for Rome on January 20, 1870, It was not only in the full meetings of the Chapel of Saints Processus and Martinianus, at St. Peter's, but also in the private gatherings held here and there, at the Roman princes, mansions, or at the office of the *Civiltá Cattolica,* or around the Cardinals of the Curia and the leaders of parties, the Fathers of the Council, that the wording of the future definitions was being slowly worked out. In his book *Rome pendant le concile*, Louis Veuillot has finely described this hidden but fruitful work of the salons, the procurators' offices, and cardinals' and princes' homes, and editorial bureaux. Don Bosco's flair was not at fault. And, in fact, he could flatter himself on having won over more than one vote for the conciliar definition. We know that a fairly powerful group, directed by Mgr. Dupanloup, eloquently defended the thesis of the inopportunity of the Dogma. The time had not come to proclaim it, in their opinion as old liberals. Among these opponents was the Bishop of Saluzzo. Mgr. Gastaldi, who was put forward by Don Bosco and afterwards raised to the

see of Turin. Scarcely had the Saint reached Rome, when he heard of it, and laid siege to his friend, and brought such strong reasons to bear upon him that one day, in a plenary session, the Bishop came out frankly in favour of the Dogma in a speech that disconcerted his former allies.

As to the triumphant issue of the Council, Don Bosco could have no doubt. On the night of January 5, at Turin, he had an enlightening dream. The terms into which, in a memorial sent to Pius IX, the dreamer tried to translate his message from Heaven, are occasionally rather sibylline, but taken as a whole, the communication is clear and well represents the difficulties which the proclamation of the Dogma had to encounter. Here is the essential portion of the document.

" *The Voice of Heaven to the Pastor of Pastors.* — Thou art about to enter into the great meeting with thine assessors; but the enemy of the good, will not be quiet for a moment. He will raise against thee all his machinations. He will sow discord amongst thine assessors, and he will raise adversaries against thee, even amongst thine own sons. The powers of this world will breathe out fire and will do violence to the guardians of the law to force them to swallow their own words, but they shall not succeed. They will do no harm to any but to themselves. But do thou thyself make haste. If thou canst settle the difficulties, cut matters short. If thou find thyself in perplexity, go forward nevertheless; hold fast until the head of the hydra of error has been cut off. The stroke will make both earth and hell tremble, but it will bring peace to the world and all the men of good will will rejoice . . . The days are hurrying on, thy years are drawing towards their close, but the great Queen is always there to help thee. Today, as she was yesterday, she will be *magnum et singulare in Ecclesia praesidium.*"

It was not the first time that the Servant of God brought the Pope a message from on high. In 1858, when about to leave Turin in company with Don Rua for his visit *ad limina*, for an urgent communication, he had taken into his room the best of his pupils, Dominic Savio, who was to be canonized in 1954.

" You are going to Rome, then, Father? " asked the boy.

" Yes, I am."

" Oh, how I should like to come with you! "

" Why? "

" To speak to the Pope. I should like to tell him that, amidst all

the sorrows that await him, he must not give up his special care for England, for God is preparing for a great triumph of Catholicism in that kingdom."

" How do you know that? "

" I will tell you, but do not tell anyone else, for they would only laugh at me. One day, during my thanksgiving after Communion, I had a marked distraction. I thought I saw a wide and darkened plain. It was full of people feeling their way about, like travellers who had gone astray. That country, said some one close by, is England. And I saw Pope Pius IX in his pontifical vesture going towards the dark plain with a flaming torch in his hand. And as he advanced the darkness disappeared, and the plain became as clear as in full daylight. The lighted torch, said he who was by me, is the symbol of Faith which is to illumine England."

While Don Bosco was relating this Vision, Pius IX fastened a most penetrating look upon him, and, when he had finished, said: " This child's warning, his strange dream impels me to work still more energetically for the conversion of England. But have not you yourself, Don Bosco, ever had any communication of this kind, urging you on to the works you have initiated? "

The point-blank question upset the seer. He had to confess the truth, and to tell Pius IX his chief dreams.

" I invite you to put them down in detail and in writing," said the Pope. " Keep them as a patrimony for your Sons."

Don Bosco promised to do so, but nine years later, in 1867, on his second visit, he had done nothing of the kind.

" What about those dreams? " asked the Pope.

" I have had no time, Holy Father."

" Very well. Now, I am not only expressing a desire, I am giving you a command; they must be written down. All other work must yield to that."

This time Don Bosco obeyed. It is to Pius IX's injunction that the Salesian Congregation owes the six big octavo notebooks in which the seer has recorded under the title: *Memorie dell'Oratorio dal 1835 al 1855*, Heaven's orders received in dreams, and the enterprises to which they have given rise.

Pius IX was so convinced of the special illumination conferred by

Heaven upon Don Bosco that in a very important crisis he adopted his counsel. The day after the breach of the *Porta Pia,* when from all quarters he was urged to flee, as in 1848, Pius IX solicited his opinion on the matter. Don Bosco, after praying at length, addressed this reply to the Pope, putting it into safe hands: *The sentinel, the Angel of Israel, must remain at his post, watching the sacred rock and the holy ark.* Under oath, Cardinal Cagliero made a deposition of the fact, as to which he was well informed, for he had himself copied out the letter addressed to the Holy Father.

The great confidence in the Saint entertained by Pius IX once impelled the Pope to make him the following proposal:

" Could you not leave Turin, Don Bosco, and settle in Rome? Would your Congregation suffer from it? "

" Holy Father, that would ruin it."

So the Pope did not insist on it. To an intimate friend, Don Bosco acknowledged that he never could have resolved to give up his boys.

From all these details, which could easily be multiplied, no one can fail to have surmised that the Founded was regarded at the Vatican more as a friend than as a servant. Their two hearts, that of the Sovereign Pontiff and of his loyal subject, understood and seemed at times to rely upon one another. How was it, then, that, later on, their friendship, through the malignity of men, was put to that most severe test, the trial of doubt? " What can I have done to Don Bosco? " groaned Pius IX, at the end of 1877. " Three times have I written to him, and he sends me no reply." And Don Bosco, too was wondering why some of his own letters, asking for certain favours, received no answer. The explanation was a very simple one: the postal services in both directions were closely watched and the letters were intercepted. The people at Turin, who were persecuting Don Bosco, had secured accomplices at the Vatican, and their vengeance penetrated into the interior of the apostolic palaces. Too late was Pius IX informed of these underground machinations. *Pazienza!* said he with a look of resignation, raising his eyes to heaven.

Patience and resignation were sorely needed by Don Bosco in December, 1877, when he was thrice refused an audience with the Holy Father. The opponents of his Oratory continued to misuse their power. The blow fell all the more heavily on Don Bosco, because he

knew, through his usual source of information, that Pius IX had but little time to live. " Soon," he predicted, " we shall see happenings that will stir the good as well as the bad." In fact, on January 9, 1878, Victor Emmanuel died almost suddenly at the Quirinal, and on February 7 it was rumoured in Rome that Pius IX was dying. In the evening of that day he was dead. On the previous evening he had again been speaking of Don Bosco. We can easily surmise how crushed the latter was by the news. What would he not have done, what would he not have given to be on his knees in that lowly cell which he knew so well, when the Pontiff's soul was leaving this world, or at any rate to have promised him an assurance of his unfailing loyalty at the close of his earthly career?

That loyalty, as we have seen, did not cease at the death of Pius IX. It was to his memory that the church of St. John the Evangelist was erected, and there, on the threshold, stands the Pope's statue in marble, an abiding monument of Don Bosco's gratitude.

A few days after Pius IX's death, while an army of workmen were hurrying to improvise apartments for the Cardinal electors, Don Bosco, who was led there by a delicate piece of business, met Cardinal Pecci, the Camerlingo of the Holy Church, in a bend of one of the corridors. He stopped a moment, fastened his eyes upon the Cardinal's face, and reverently knelt down and said:

" Allow me, your Eminence, to kiss your hand."

" Who are you," asked the Cardinal, " that you come to me with this assurance? "

" I am a poor priest, and today I am kissing you Eminence's hand; but in a few days I hope, indeed, to kiss your foot."

" I forbid you to pray for that."

" You cannot forbid me to ask God for what is His own good pleasure."

" If you pray in that fashion," replied Cardinal Pecci, trying to assume a tone of severity, " I threaten you with censures."

" Oh, your Eminence, you have no authority as yet to inflict them upon me. When you have, I will obey."

" But who are you to talk to me in this fashion? "

" I am Don Bosco."

" Come, hold your peace. It is time to work, not to jest."

And the Cardinal Camerlingo, went on his way. As we know, within a week, on February 20, he was elected by the Conclave, and took the name of Leo XIII.

For several weeks the Saint could get no nearer to the Pope than in a general audience. A little while before, when he was busy with the episcopal nominations, all doors were open to him in the apostolic palaces; now he could not get even a private audience. It was a hard trial to one loaded with so many other troubles. At last, on March 16, Leo XIII admitted him to his presence for the first time. He was not Pius IX, with his simple and cordial welcome which set one immediately at ease; but despite his lofty air, his look inspired with genius, and the authority in his grave tone of voice, the new Pontiff, in his own way, could subjugate men's hearts. He was charmingly kind to Don Bosco, made close inquiries as to all his undertakings, gave him counsels for all his Sons and, like Pius IX, told him that God's blessing was certainly upon all his labours. " Those who say that miracles never occur," he declared, " would be very puzzled to explain how, humanly speaking, a poor priest can manage to feed thousands upon thousands of children. It must be confessed that the hand of God is there." The Saint left the Vatican with his soul overflowing with joy, for, despite the calumnies which had been pouring for years upon his name and succeeding in getting a hearing both within and around the Vatican, the Pope recognised his services.

Two years later, we know how Leo XIII appealed for them when he was harassed by delays in the building of the church of the Sacred Heart, and entrusted its completion to Don Bosco at the audience which he granted him on April 3, 1880. Despite his age and his increasing infirmities, the dreaded honour was accepted because, as Cardinal Alimonda said, the Pope's desire was to his subject a command.

His loyal and faithful devotion was four years afterwards to receive one of its most pleasing rewards. It was in the spring of 1884. Don Bosco had returned to Rome for the sixteenth time in order to obtain the privileges which, by assimilating his Congregation to others highly favoured by the Holy See, would thereby make it completely independent, and finally free, for instance, to present its subjects for ordination. It will be remembered that in 1874 Don Bosco had obtained this prized favour for ten years only. A long memorandum, carefully prepared by

his own hand, begged for these privileges which, in the past, had been graciously granted to this or that Congregation, quoted by Don Bosco. He thought that a request, supported with such solid arguments, would suffice to gain the favour. But far from it. The Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, Cardinal Ferrieri, had him informed, as soon as he arrived in Rome, that he must complete his memorandum with exact historical particulars: in each case, specification was indispensable of the original direct grant of the privileges, the date, the Pope's name, and the name of the Institute. When Don Bosco heard of these fresh requirements he was tempted to feel discouraged. He was the only one who could furnish the information, for he alone had laboriously erected the scaffolding of the memorial, and now he had to begin all over again the lengthy researches he had toiled through. " My head can bear no more," he confided to a friend, " I see I shall have to give up these privileges. I shall ask for a few of them, the principal ones, and then I shall go back to Turin. If they are granted me, so much the better; but if not, never mind. We shall get on that way."

It was Leo XIII himself who spoke the decisive word that settled the thorny question. On May 9 Don Bosco was received in private audience, and that day the Pope was extraordinarily kind to him. After kissing the Pope's foot, the good old man asked permission to stand: " No, you must not stand, but sit down, Don Bosco," said the Pope, and had a chair put beside himself for him. Then he enquired very anxiously after his health.

" You must take care of yourself," said Leo XII. " Spare no means for that end. You have done enough wearing yourself out. Your life life belongs to the Church and to the Congregation you have founded. I see your Institute spreading everywhere, in France, in Spain, in America, and even in Patagonia. Your life and your counsels are indispensable to all your increasing number of Sons. If I were ill, I am sure you would do all that you possibly could do to restore me to health: well, I want you to treat yourself in the same way. It is my will; do you understand that? I even make this an order. The Church needs you."

" Indeed, you are too kind, Holy Father," replied Don Bosco, overcome with emotion by the Pope's solicitude. " I feel quite bewildered, but I promise to obey your orders."

" Very good. And now, what have you to ask me? Don't be afraid; I am disposed to grant you everything."

" Holy Father," said Don Bosco, taking the ball on the bounce, " crown the edifice of the Salesian Society by granting it the privileges that it asks you for. These privileges have been granted to other Congregations whose subjects can be counted on one's fingers. The Salesians already amount to over five hundred, and they have been asking for these favours for years; do not refuse them."

" Well, then, that is settled," said the great Pope. " Tell the Secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars that he must prepare the documents, and I will sign them without their having to pass through the Congregation. That will be all the easier for me," added the Pope, with a mischievous smile, " because poor Mgr. X is no more. He was a stout opponent of yours. He has spared no pains in hindering the grant of privileges. The Pope, you see, cannot always do as he wishes: but now you will be satisfied. Dear, Don Bosco, I love you, I love you, I love you. I want to be everything to the Salesians; I want to be considered the first of your Co-operators. Whoever is your enemy is God's enemy; I am now certain of it. With the poorest means you build the grandest works. Courage. Courage. The Pope, the Church, the Catholic world, all admire you and your Society. It is God himself who guides and sustains and helps on your Congregation. Tell it, write it, proclaim it! In His divine protection lies the secret of your triumph over the obstacles and enemies you encounter."

These obstacles and enemies, discreetly alluded to by the Pope, had now tormented the life of the Founder for more than ten years. As we shall see in a later chapter, the cross he had to bear on occasions was a crushing burden, and those who loaded his weary shoulders with it were the very people who, as Pius XI said, on an important occasion, ought to have helped him in his work. At one time, as we have already hinted, they almost succeeded in winning over to their views the Supreme Pontiff, in raising between his ever-venerated master and that master's good servant a cloud of distrust. But now every misunderstanding was dissipated, and the words of Leo XIII were a just reparation for all the sorrows so heroically endured by Don Bosco at Turin from 1872 to 1882.

" Holy Father," replied Don Bosco with the deepest emotion, " I cannot find words with which to thank you. But of one thing I can assure you: it is that we have always worked hard to train our young people in affection, respect and obedience to the Holy See and to the Vicar of Christ. Such little good as we have achieved we attribute to the benediction and to the protection of the Pope."

Various other subjects were touched upon, especially the Salesian Missions; then, after having received a last blessing from Leo XIII, Don Bosco left, leaning upon the arm of his secretary, Father Lemoyne. On the staircase, he made a remark that spoke eloquently of the steep Calvary he had had to climb in the last few years. " Really," he murmured, " I needed this welcome to set me up again; I was at the end of my strenght."

For the last time Don Bosco was to come into touch with the Pope on the eve of the consecration of the church of the Sacred Heart, on May 13, 1887. This audience was to be the final leave taking from his master by this faithful servant. The last task entrusted to him by the Pope had been hard, indeed very hard; more than once his aged shoulders threatened to give way under the burden. Despite everything, however, he had succeeded in carrying it through. But he felt tired, very tired and utterly worn out; his days appeared to him to be numbered. Then, before leaving this world, he was set upon making a last obeisance to him who in the eyes of faith, personified Christ. " I am very old, Holy, Father," murmured he in this last *téte-á-téte,* " but before dying I want to see Your Holiness once more and receive your benediction. Now my prayer is answered, and I, too, have only to say my *Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine*! "

This hymn of benediction was not the last expression of the devotion of the Saint to Peter's Chair. At every fresh election of the Superior General of the Salesians, they read in public the confidential rules left by Don Bosco for the regulation of the great proceeding. The electors, about to drop their votes into the urn, are reminded by the Saint that their Superior must possess at least three qualities, and the third is *an indisputable attachment to the Holy See and to all that is concerned therewith.*

Even from heaven, St. John Bosco, through his successors, still goes on serving the Roman Pontiff.

Relations with Rulers

Considering the disturbed period in which Don Bosco lived the question arises: " How did he manage during the very difficult times between Italy's cry of independence in 1848 and the entry of the Piedmontese troops through the Porta Pia in to Rome? His work required the support of the powerful; the enormous increase of his Houses attracted the attention of politicians; his relations with the Vatican stirred the uneasy curiosity of rival authorities; how did he deal with them? What attitude did he assume towards the monarch and his ministers whom he could not disregard? "

An attitude of independence. He once said: *In politica, sono di nessuno*, " In politics, I belong to no one." He was above all parties; he did not bother about them. " My policy is that of the *Pater*," he used tc say, i.e., he cared only about establishing the Kingdom of God in the souls of the young, of the people. Nothing else had the slightest claim upon his mind or his energies. His Catholic sense instinctively made him see that the priest must not take up any position in the scuffle of ideas, because he belongs to all men. To join a party, to label oneself politically, is inevitably to come into conflict with Christians of the opposite party: but — how often did he reiterate it! — to accomplish his work, Don Bosco needed everybody, the most staunch Liberal as well as the most uncompromising Conservative. Cavour, Crispi, Rattazzi, Ricasoli, all the leaders of the *Risorgimento* were his friends and benefactors, as also were Pius IX, Antonelli, the Jesuits of the Civiltá Cattolica, Leo Harmel, and the Marchesa di Barolo. His apostolic zeal, in adopting this attitude, also led him to think — he often acknowledged

it — of the eternal destiny of the politicians entangled in error. People never summon to their deathbeds a partisan, a priest wrapped up in the things of this world, but one whom they have seen entirely devoted to the Kingdom of God.

As we know, it was made a grievance against him, even at the process of his beatification, that he had contracted friendships with the Liberals, and that he had relations with notorious enemies of the Church. In fact, during the second half of the nineteenth century, Don Bosco was perhaps the only priest in Italy who maintained continuous contact with the founders of the new Italy. The day after the first occurrences that led to the formation of Italian Unity by the absorption of all the peninsular States under the Cross of Savoy, the clergy deliberately took up the position of adversaries and destroyed the bridges between them and the new authority. Very few still dared into the world of the usurpers: among them one could often see Don Bosco. He had the best of reasons for doing so. He had to reckon with these men in order to live; he wanted to make them his accomplices in the good he was doing, and he thought of their souls, waiting for the propitious moment when he might sow them with the good seed of remorse. His is the following daring declaration, justifying his attitude with regard to the bitterest adversaries of the Christian name: " If, between a soul to be saved and my attempt to save it, stood the devil himself, waiting for me to take off my hat in order to pass by and reach that soul, I would not hesitate for a moment." Another time, at Florence, being invited by Ricasoli, the President of the Council, to assist as official intermediary for the nomination of Bishops in over a hundred dioceses of Italy, he very precisely lays it down that the appeal is made to him as priest, not as son of Piedmont, or as a friend of the ministers, or as a diplomat. He is quite ready to deal with such things, but as a priest only. " Priest at the altar, priest in the confessional, priest among my boys, and priest in the king's palace or in his ministers' offices, I will be nothing but a priest." It is because he would be that only that he was so often entrusted with, or himself undertook, the most delicate missions, and was able to make them a success. Don Bosco became a political force by keeping clear of politics.

The first relations between Don Bosco and the Court of Turin go back to 1854; they originated in the preparation and the carrying of a

law which implicitly abolished conventual property, the Rattazzi Law, which was vigorously applied by Cavour, the Finance Minister. One day in December, 1854, on entering the refectory at midday, Don Bosco, with a packet of letters in his hand, exclaimed to some of the superintendents: " Today I have written to three important persons: to the executioner, to the Pope, and to the King." On hearing these three names coming together in the same sentence, the clerics burst out laughing. No one was astonished at Don Bosco having written to the executioner and to the Pope. They knew his relations with the staff of the Turin prisons, and were also aware of the correspondence that passed between their Head and the Vatican. But the letter to the King pricked everyone's curiosity. " What have you written to the King? " asked a bold young cleric. " A dream I had last night. I thought I was under the porticoes, near the fountain, when suddenly a Court valet in red uniform came to me and cried out: ' Great news! ' — ' What? ' I asked. — ' Great mourning at Court! ' said he twice running; and then went off. Then I wrote to His Majesty this morning just to tell him of my dream."

Five days later the dream was repeated, this time the valet liveried in scarlet called out: " Great bereavements at Court! " A second time Don Bosco communicated the funeral announcement to his sovereign. To his mind, it seemed a heavenly warning, threatening chastisement to the monarch, if he allowed the discussion on the articles of the iniquitous law to take place. Unhappily, the warning was useless. The law for the suppression of the convents was presented on November 28, 1854, and carried on the second reading on May 28, 1855. Meanwhile, the Queen Mother died on January 12, almost suddenly; and on January 20 it was the turn of the King's wife, Maria Adelaide of Austria, and on February, 11 that of the King's brother, Ferdinand of Savoy, Duke of Genoa.

A few years later, in 1863, the Court, the Government and the Parliaments were transferred to Florence, merely a stage between Turin and Rome, which they reached in 1870. It was at Florence, in 1865, that the Saint received his first political mission in the thorny matter of the episcopal nominations. Italy had then a hundred and eight vacant sees; some through death, others from exile, and a few through the Government's opposition to the taking possession of their sees by the

titulars. Deeply moved by such a spiritual harmful state of affairs, Don Bosco worked as far as he could to remedy it. On the one hand, he revealed his apprehensions to Pius IX, on the other, got his friends to sound the intentions of the Government. He was told that they were favourable to negotiations, which began on May 6, 1865, with a letter from Pius IX to Victor Emmanuel. The Pope asked the King " to wipe away from the eyes of the Church of Italy a few of her tears " by helping towards a generous agreement. On the 17th of this month, Don Bosco was ordered to Florence as an official intermediary, while the Government sent to Rome as their agent a deputy who was well-known for his attachment to the Pope, Xavier Vegezzi.

The business went forward at a good pace, and, through mutual concessions, an honourable solution was quickly reached. For the Piedmontese bishoprics, the King, according to the terms of the Sardinian Concordat, was to present his candidates; for the other dioceses of Italy, the Pope was to nominate his own directly, nevertheless submitting his list to the King before preconisation; with few exceptions, the exiled Bishops were to regain their dioceses, and temporalities of the Bishops were to remain intact. On his side, the Pope agreed, in principle, to the reduction, by grouping some together, of the number of the Italian bishoprics, but he rejected the governmental demands concerning the *exequatur* to be accorded to papal bulls as well as the Bishops' oath of allegiance to all Sardinian legislation. On these bases, it was strongly believed that an agreement would be finally arranged. Unfortunately, indiscretions were committed, the substance of the negotiations became known to certain politicians bitterly hostile to the Church. A press campaign, conferences, and meetings brought pressure to bear upon the pusillanimous minds of the responsible ministers. The Government, which was ready to give way on the questions of the *exequatur* and the oath, evaded the issue, and this attempt at a peaceful solution ended in nothing more than the return of the exiled Bishops. This was something, but it was very little. The first game was lost.

A year later, they were more fortunate. On the advice of Napoleon III, who wanted to turn young Italy away from anticlericalism, which was injurious to the cause of Italian Unity, new official conversations were inaugurated between Florence and Rome. The intermediary chosen by the President of the Council, Ricasoli, was Commander Tonello, a

man as clever as he was well-meaning. From his first coming into touch with the Vatican, he brought away with him the impression that the Holy See would allow the Government *carte blanche* for the nomination of episcopal candidates in the Sardinian States and even in Lombardy and Venetia, which had been recently attached to the crown, but that it would not yield as to the nomination of episcopal candidates in the other Italian States, especially in those of the Papal States, nor as to the presentation of papal bulls to the Government of Florence. The discussion had come to a standstill when Don Bosco reached Rome in January, 1867. When informed of the position, he quickly saw that as long as both sides surveyed the problem from the political point of view only nothing could be decided.

" The angle must be changed," he ventured to suggest to Pius IX.

" Not an easy thing to do, dear Don Bosco."

" We can, however, try."

And he went in search of Cardinal Antonelli, the Secretary of State, with a proposal that revealed extraordinary subtlety of mind. " Let us start with the principle, that we must succeed at all costs, because the good of souls and the interest of the dioceses come first, and let us devise a solution which, with a few concessions on either side, will safeguard everyone's *amour propre* and respect every principle, this for instance. Both powers shall draw up a separate list of candidates for the episcopal sees, without distinction of Sates; there shall be names chosen for the bishoprics of Tuscany as well as for those of Piedmont, for the bishoprics of Romagna as well as for those of the kingdom of Naples. The two lists shall be compared, and the names common to both shall be submitted to the first choice of the next Consistory." Pius IX gave his consent to this adroit contrivance; and that was the concession made by the Holy See. On his side, Commander Tonello abandoned the demand for a presentation of papal bulls; and that was the concession offered by the Government.

On this new basis, fresh conversations were entered upon. They soon issued in a complete agreement. Provided with instructions from his Government, Tonello draw up a list of sixty names. Helped with Don Bosco's advice, Pius IX and his Secretary of State drew up another, with formal designations to such-and-such a bishopric. Some objections were raised on both sides, some transfers from one see to another, but

finally both agreed as to thirty-four nominations, which were precognised at the Consistories of February 22nd and March 27 of 1867.

Unfortunately, on April 4 the Ricasoli Ministry fell, and gave way to that of Rattazzi, who came into power with a definitely anticlerical policy. Nearly three years had to elapse before the conversation could be resumed.

It was at the end of spring in 1871 that Don Bosco, after informing Pius IX, wrote officially to Lanza, the Prime Minister, to point out the inconsistency of the Government in evading the nomination of Bishops to more than sixty vacant sees, and at the same time voting the Law of Guarantees lately promulgated (May 13, 1871).

The Ministry, which had not yet been transferred to Rome, accepted Don Bosco's mediation to begin the settlement of this delicate business. He obtained from Pius IX full power to act. The Pope went so far as to say to him: " Draw up a complete list of the future Bishops for me, and I will approve it through your hands." In the month of August the list was ready. To secure the strongest safeguard, the Saint had invited confidential reports from all directions; one day, at Nizza Monferrato, at the villa of the Countess Corsi, he gathered around him not less than eighteen Vicars General or Capitular, whose counsels he asked for. At the Consistory on October 27, 1871, forty of the proposed candidates were precognised by the Pope. The Government still refused them their temporalities, but did not oppose their taking possession of their sees; and that was the principal matter. Hence, Don Bosco's intervention appears to be an almost complete success.

He would have wished to obtain a victory all along the line by getting the Government to grant a pure and simple restitution of the episcopal temporalities. In the spring of 1873, he went to Rome again about this business, which was about to come to an issue when the breakdown of the Lanza ministry threw everything into uncertainty. The Saint was not discouraged; in December of the same year he again started for the Eternal City, with the firm determination of getting matters finally settled this time. The President of the Council, Minghetti, agreed to the arrangement with a fairly good grace, and Pius IX continued to approve of Don Bosco's diplomatic endeavours. Unfortunately, his repeated presence at Rome awoke the attention of the Masonic Lodges, which, through the newspapers in their pay, started a campaign

of intimidation. One day the Turin *Gazzetta del Popolo* said: " Today the celebrated Don Bosco of Turin is to be met with in Rome. He enjoys his frequent calls at the Vatican, and the Pope gives him a pretty favourable reception. Moreover, he had also free access to our own politicians. No one knows what he is up to, but certainly things of importance." And on another occasion the *Secolo* of Milan remarked: " The Piedmontese episcopate has decided on sending to Rome, with the object of laying the foundation of an agreement between Church and State, a certain Don Bosco, an ecclesiastic well-known for his breadth of view, his high character, and his zeal in Church affairs. It is a very skilful selection, for, on the one hand, he will awaken no suspicions at the Vatican, and, on the other, he will receive a favourable welcome from the Government functionaries. What are the bases of the proposed agreement? Nothing has come out. But that this priest both acts and speaks with extraordinary ardour, none can question."

These short paragraphs, apparently so innocent, produced this primary effect: they focussed public opinion upon proceedings which, for success, ought to have been kept secret till the end. Less than this was needed to set astir . . . Berlin. Bismarck, as we know, always thought that, for Germany, anticlericalism should be an article for exportation. We know the orders given to his diplomatic staff in France during the days of Gambetta. The German statesman thought, indeed, that in weakening, even if only indirectly, Catholic feeling in Latin countries, he was dislocating the traditional contexture of the race he wanted to unsettle to the great advantage of Luther and of the countries of free thought. Hence, we are not astonished to find the negotiations between the Vatican and the Quirinal suddenly brought to a standstill through orders from the Wilhelmstrasse. " Nothing to be done, my dear Don Bosco," confidentially remarked the Minister Vigliani to him one night when they met in a lobby of the Parliament. " We can't make any further progress. Bismarck is against us, and Prussia holds our political fate in her hands."

This order from Berlin ended the official mission of the Saint. It had not attained its object, but nevertheless it had not been in vain. To make some compensation for backing down in this fashion, the Government continued to lend itself to new episcopal nominations, conceded an *exequatur* to a number of parish priests who were still kept

waiting, and first disputed, and then granted, a *modus vivendi*, enabling the Bishops nominated by the Holy See to enter into possession of their episcopal revenues. So this time the game had not been altogether lost.

On another occasion, in 1878, just after the death of Pius IX, it was completely won. During the pontifical interregnum, the Vatican diplomatists, being justly uneasy, aptly remembered that seven years previously Don Bosco had been the official agent of their policy; they therefore begged him to sound the Ministry to find out whether the first Conclave, held after Victor Emmanuel's entry into Rome, would be able to assemble freely. He first went to find the competent Minister Mancini, Minister of Justice; his reception was lamentable. He then turned to the President of the Council, Crispi, who appeared to be more evasive than anything else. But when the statesman heard the Vatican envoy ask, in the name of the Sacred College, for a definite and immediate reply, and assure him that, if it were not held in Rome, it would be in Venice, Vienna, or even in Avignon, Crispi reflected awhile, and then stretched out his hand to Don Bosco saying: " Tell the Sacred College that the Government will respect and will make others respect the freedom of the Conclave, and that nothing will arise to disturb public order."

Then, suddenly becoming affable and almost cordial:

" Do you know, I have not forgotten the Turin of 1852, and my wretched little room near the Consolata, in Orphan Street. I also remember that I sometimes went to you for confession at the Oratory."

" Well, as for myself, I don't remember that," said Don Bosco, with a kindly smile; " but if you should still require my services, I am always at your disposal."

Then they talked of various matters, like two old friends. The Italian statesman kept a warm corner in his heart for the days of his youth spent in the old capital of Piedmont. He saw himself once more as the young member for Palermo, elected in the 1848 Revolution, then exiled on the return of the Bourbons to the island, and taking refuge in Turin, the centre of the *Risorgimento*. Hard years of penury. He had tried to live by the pen as a journalist and communal secretary; and could never succeed. Then he had made his appeal to Don Bosco's hospitality for six weeks, and then to his charity, which supplied this poor Sicilian outlaw with shoes. It was a strange reversal so far as this world

was concerned. He was now President of the Council, and his benefactor of thirty years ago was standing in front of him, awaiting his decision.

This turn of fortune's wheel did not surprise Don Bosco, who ten years earlier, in 1867, had come to Francis II, King of Naples, exiled by the Revolution, and then staying at the Farnese Palace in Rome. That morning of February 7, he had been begged by the dispossessed sovereigns to celebrate Mass in their private chapel. At the end of the Holy Sacrifice, the Saint had spoken to his illustrious audience on the salvation of their souls. " We must think of saving our souls," he said to them in substance; " as for the goods of this world, we may lose them today and find them again tomorrow. If we lose our souls, it is all over with us for ever."

At the meal that followed, Francis II asked him point-blank: " Well, Father, we have lost, not one kingdom, but two; can we win them back again? " Don Bosco was not expecting such a question. He hesitated a moment before replying. Then, with a smile, he whispered these words: " Sire, let us think about winning the Kingdom of God, everything lies in that."

" And the kingdom of this world? " persisted the King. " If you only knew how my subjects regret me, and are calling out for me! "

" And yet God has ordered otherwise, Sire. What Jeremias said in his days, your Majesty can now say with him: " So must we bear the guilt of our fathers, that sinned and are gone." Who has forgotten the outrages the Church of Naples had to suffer at the hands of your ancestors? Such sins pass from father to son, and often the innocent have to pay for the guilty."

" But the Queen and I have done good; and we were ready to do more, when the Revolution . . ."

" But will do more good, Sire, by bearing the burden of expiation with resignation."

" Then you infer that . . ."

" That your Majesty will never see Naples again."

The King lowered his eyes and murmured: " It is a different future from that which I had dreamed of; but I accept it in reparation of the evil which my family may have done to the Church."

The Queen did not share his opinion, nor his resignation. Every-

thing was getting worse and worse since their departure, said she; and from month to month hope was growing greater in the hearts of their partisans. Despite all appearances, better days were close at hand.

On this rather forced optimistic note the conversation came to an end. They rose; the King asked for Don Bosco's blessing and insisted on accompanying him. The Queen left him at the door of the room, rather put out by his prediction.

As we know, it was literally fulfilled. On the Piedmontese soldiers entering into Rome, the royal pair fled to Paris, where Francis II died in 1894. The Queen survived him by more than twenty years; and she died on January 19, 1923, at Munich, the capital of her native land, and never saw Naples again, as Don Bosco had foretold.

It was not only with a few of the victims of the *Risorgimento* that Don Bosco came into touch, but he also had to do with him who was the true stimulator of it, Cavour. Strange to say, the two men resembled one another in more ways than one: in ardour for work, in good humour, in contempt for any sort of pose, in unusual practical ability, in all these, both the statesman and the saint were representative of the Piedmontese race from which they sprang. Hear how both of them explained their way of tackling obstructions in their path; the similarity of their thoughts could not be closer: " When I encounter a difficulty," said Don Bosco, " I act like a man who comes across a great beam blocking the road. I try hard to get it out of the way, but if I cannot manage that, I step over it or go round it. In the same way, if I have begun an undertaking, and some obstacle is encountered, I leave it off to give a hand to some other enterprise; but I always keep an eye on the first. Meanwhile, the fruit is ripening, men change, and difficulties get smoothed out." " To reach that point," said Cavour in 1860 to an intimate friend, " I see the straight road that leads directly to it quite clearly; but if, when halfway there, I meet with an insurmountable impediment, I am not going to break my skull by running into it, for the pleasure of smashing through it. Nor shall I turn back. I shall take a glance to the right, and a glance to the left, and not being able to go forward directly, I shall follow a curve. I shall turn the obstacle which I cannot overcome by a frontal attack."

The relations between the two men went back to 1848, when the two Cavour brothers, Camillo and Gustavo, apparently competed with

one another in piety, and used to edify Don Bosco's first Oratory by their behaviour. This did not last, at any rate in the case of Camillo; but, although completely won over to the new ideas, Cavour nevertheless continued to be the friend of the holy priest. Here is Don Bosco's own testimony: " Count Camillo," he writes, " reckoned me amongst his friends. On several occasions he prompted me to petition the Government for my Oratory. One day he went so far as to offer me a million lire for the extension of its advantages. When I listened to his offer in silence, he urged me, saying:

" Well, Don Bosco, what is your decision? "

" I cannot accept."

" Why? Are not your needs enormous? "

" Yes, indeed, Sir. But if I accept your million in any sort of fashion today, they are sure to come and get it back from me. So I had better spare myself the worry."

This was but a new, and a very up-to-date, version of the old fable of " The wolf and the Dog." One's living and one's meals and a few things guaranteed, these are all very well; but one's independence is better.

The great statesman rarely deviated from this marked benevolence towards Don Bosco. The Saint also writes as follows: " Count Cavour often used to tell me that, if I had any favour to solicit, I would always find a place laid for me at his table. ' In my office at the Ministry, we cannot manage to talk,' said he; ' after a few words, we have to leave one another. At table, it is otherwise; we can converse quite freely.' "

Once, however — in 1860 finding himself taken between his Liberal friends and his sympathy for Don Bosco, Cavour deserted his friend and allowed his Minister of the Interior, Farini, to make a perquisition at the Oratory, which police reports showed to be a centre of reaction. Cavour had no illusions about it. He told them quite frankly: " Your perquisition is useless. Don Bosco is cleverer than we are; either he is not compromised, or else all the papers are in safe keeping. However, do as you like." The affair also had its sequel at the Ministry, and it was Cavour, the deft Cavour, who got Farini out of his embarrassment, for Don Bosco had come to ask what right he had to break into the dwelling of a citizen who — as the inquisition had proved — had done nothing with which he could be reproached.

" Of evidence, of tangible evidence against you, dear Don Bosco, we can produce no trace; but it is the spirit that prevails in your House that is incompatible with our policy. Whatever you may do or say, you are with the Pope, and therefore against us.

" Well, Count," replied the humble priest, " that is quite true; I am with the Pope, and on his side I shall stay till I die. But that does not keep me in any way from being an excellent citizen. As for politics, I will have nothing to do with them at any price. For twenty years I have been living in Turin: I have written, spoken and worked without any secrecy; show me a line, a word or a gesture that your authority could condemn."

" You have well said, dear Father," interrupted Farini, " that your ideas are not the same as ours."

" Am I obliged, then, to think as you do? "

" No; but you are not the sort of man to think without acting."

" Well then, I again ask the question: Can anyone quote a single line or word or act of mine which fails in its respect for authority? It seems to me that in collecting together some hundreds of boys and keeping them steadily in the path of duty, I have honestly collaborated with you in maintaining public order. There you have all my politics."

The two Ministers had nothing to say in reply to this temperate and yet eloquent argument. As he was going through the door, Farini thought it well to whisper a hint in his ears:

" Be prudent, be prudent, my dear Father. We live in difficult times. A fly, nowadays, may swell out to the size of an elephant."

" Many thanks, your Excellency," replied Don Bosco. " Let us, then, agree to this: when you have a hint to give me, give it to me as a friend, and I shall be obliged to you for it."

After the last handshake, it was Cavour who finished up with: " Very good, then: we are friends as before, dear Don Bosco, and . . . pray for us."

" Certainly, I will pray for you, Sir, that God may be your helper all your life long and at the hour of your death."

The two men were never to see one another again. A year later, Cavour died, and after having seen a priest. We know the astonishment — not to say the scandal — elicited by the strange way in which the rector of St. Mary of the Angels, which was his parish, fulfilled his

ministry at the dying man's bedside. However, the fact remains; Cavour saw a priest before he died. His friend's prayer was not in vain.

Another statesman, who was several times President of the Council and the originator of many anti-Catholic laws, Urban Rattazzi, whom we have twice already met with, did not cease showing his ardent sympathy with the Saint.

The day after the second search of Don Bosco's domicile, he offered to make an interpellation in the Chamber, to get a vote of censure on the action that had been taken. Don Bosco thanked him warmly for his good intention, but begged him to refrain; he preferred to deal directly with the Ministers involved, and, as we have seen, his procedure was successful.

Rattazzi had such great confidence in Don Boscò that once he asked him point-blank: " Do you think that, as a Minister of State and as the author of certain laws of which you do not approve, I have really incurred the censures of the Church? " Don Bosco asked for a few days to reflect, and then, at their first interview, replied: " I wish I had been able to reassure your conscience, Sir, but I have not found a single theologian who has enabled me to do so." " My dear Don Bosco," replied Rattazzi, " I like your frankness. You are the first I have met with who treats me in that way. In return, I beg to offer you my services: when you need them for your boys, don't fear to have recourse to them."

The following conversation, too, is very spicy in its own way: it occurred at the opening of the little railway linking Turin with Lanzo, on August 6, 1876. Don Bosco was talking with the three Ministers, Depretis, Nicotera and Zanardelli, who had come to preside at the ceremony. After the glass of vermouth served out to the invited guests in the reception room of the Salesian College at Lanzo in honour of the occasion, the Ministers expressed a wish to take a turn round the garden which commands a delightful Alpine landscape. Don Bosco was in charge of them. As they were sitting for a while on one of the stone seats, one of the three, Nicotera, began to banter the Saint.

" They say, Don Bosco, that you are on rather intimate terms with the Pope, and that you make both minor and major visits at the Vatican."

" They must exaggerate, your Excellency. What is true is that, whenever I am in Rome, the Holy Father receives me with great kind-

ness. But he is not the only one who receives me pleasantly; I know some Ministers, too, who do the same. Lately, I was lending a hand towards assisting in the settlement of an affair pending between the Vatican and the Ministry of Worship. Everyone was very amiable to me. I had not to do any more lobbying at the Ministry than at the Vatican."

" One question, Don Bosco," interrupted the Senator Riccotti. " Does not your House turn out too many priests and too many professors? "

" The number of priests is nothing compared with that of workmen, clerks, soldiers, officials and lawyers that it produces. And then in any case, you would not forbid a priest to think of seeking for recruits for the clergy. What would you say of an officer who urged no one to join up as a volunteer? — Too many professors? Why, it is you who force us to provide them, with your terrible laws. To direct a school and to teach a class you demand academic degrees; so we take them. Whose fault is that? "

" Don Bosco," suddenly exclaimed Deputy Ercole, " you, it seems, can read deep into people's hearts. Tell us which is the greater sinner, Nicotera or Zanardelli? "

" Leave us alone," broke in Nicotera. " Rather ask Don Bosco, whether you are not the biggest sinner of the lot of us? "

" But I have no intention of being converted," answered the deputy.

" Then you are more guilty than we are, for you know what is wrong, and go on doing it nevertheless. Remember, the Bible says: *Desiderium peccatorum peribit.* Don't you think so, Don Bosco? "

" Oh! " said the Servant of God, " I should be very puzzled to settle your dispute. To come to a decision about your souls, you gentlemen would have to stay here, not for just an hour's talk, but for a week's meditating on the vanity of riches, the worth of heavenly goods, the strictness of God's judgement, and on eternity. After which, they would make a good general confession; then one might come to a decision as to their souls."

" Well, do you think we shall save these souls of ours, Don Bosco? " asked two or three of the parliamentarians.

" I hope so. God's mercy is so great."

" But you know, we are not burning with the desire to be converted immediately."

" You mean to say, you would like to be converted, but at the same

time to continue . . .; or that you would like to change your lives, but you have not the courage to do so."

" Exactly so, Don Bosco."

" Then, as one of you said just now, the Bible replied: *Desiderium peccatorum peribit*."

The conversation was carried on for some time. It touched upon other subjects, amidst which, without seeming to deal with them, the Saint was able, with a joke, a reflection, or a timely doubt, to remind them adroitly of a few Christian principles, accustomed as they were to an altogether different philosophy. They quitted one another in the evening, still good friends. Good-humour, frankness and open-heartedness had so maintained this long talk that, on the threshold of the porter's lodge, Nicotera, expressing everyone's thoughts, said to Don Bosco:

" What a pleasant evening we have spent? One of the happiest in my life."

" To enjoy such another one, we should have to come back to Lanzo College," added Zanardelli.

" Poor Ministers! " sighed Don Bosco, that night, amidst a group of his religious. " Fancy their having to come up here to find a sincere word spoken from the heart, or a truth of the faith presented without harshness. They have never heard such a full sermon as that of this afternoon. I did not conceal any truth from them, but spoke to them from the heart; and they could not take offence. This conversation was as good as a little retreat for them. It is our way of rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's of showing respect to established authority. And this way of proceeding has a second advantage: they have seen and come into touch with the priest, not as he is portrayed to them, but as he is, a man with a heart, who thinks only of the salvation of their souls. Who can tell whether at their last hour the memory of this may not induce them to call in a priest when they are on their deathbeds? "

It was indeed this constant solicitude that permeated all the relations of the Saint with the great ones of this world: he tried to unclose their souls to sow them with the good seed which might tomorrow, under the sunshine of grace, spring up in charity, in amendment and in remorse. He never flattered the powerful, and his dignity when face to face with rulers was sometimes neither wanting in courage nor in

beauty. But, on the other hand, he endeavoured always to keep in touch with authority, first of all, because it comes from God, and because its support was indispensable to him for his livelihood and for the extension of his work of social salvation, but above all because his priestly and saintly heart yearned to lead it gently and fairly, with the help of light and goodness, to his Christian conception of the part it had to play.

How many other incidents could we adduce in support of this twofold observation. For instance, the promise he wrung from the Minister Lanza, not to interfere with the Mother Houses of the religious Orders founded in the Eternal City. The intervention of the Minister of the Interior, which he effected in favour of keeping Sunday as a day of rest, though it had been outrageously violated in the new Rome. The clandestine letters exchanged between Pius IX and Victor Emmanuel, of which he was the chief messenger. In these circumstances, as in a hundred others, Don Bosco merely acted upon the advice given by Pius IX, to the Venerable Ludovico de Casoria.

" Holy Father," said the latter, in 1860, to the Pope, " the revolution is close at hand; what ought I to do? Shut myself up in my cell and pray, or go down into the fray and work? Those fellows would make use of us to do evil. Can we try to make use of them to do a little good? "

" Return to Naples, gentle son of St. Francis," replied Pope Pius IX, " and leave your cell. Go down into the fray, as you said, and make use even of your enemies to accomplish God's work. Do that, and you will gain great merit in heaven."

The Educator

In 1886, two years before he died, the Saint had a letter from the Superior of the Major Seminary of Montpellier, asking him for the secret of his system. It was a second request. To the Superior's first letter he had replied: " It is thanks to the fear of God, sown in the hearts of my lads, that I get all I want from them." " But," answered his correspondent, " the fear of God is only the beginning of wisdom. How is the work to be completed? Come, Father, give me the key of your educational method, for the greater gain of my seminarists." " My system! My system! " repeated the Saint, as he folded up the letter: " but what if I don't know it myself! I have had only one merit: to go ahead, as God and circumstances inspired me."

And this was true. Never had this man, with the genius for education, thought of planning out a system. At the close of his life he summarised, in a few short and clear principles, the results of his experience; but that was all. He always refused to write a set treatise on the subject. His book was his life. He lived out his educational system after becoming steeped in it by experience. Moreover this was the school of teaching to which he invited his disciples. When the latter were about to leave him for any special destination, and asked for a few directions, he used to answer: " Do as you have seen me do." When one of his religious could not manage to get out of some serious embarrassment, he would come to the rescue with a practical solution, and end up with: " Now you see what must be done." Asked by teachers, how he trained his disciples, he used to say: " I throw my dog into the water to teach him to swim."

This living pedagogy, this almost infallible art of manipulating the hearts of boys and lads, how had he acquired it? It was his gift, his calling. Others are born poets or artists or mathematicians; he was a born teacher. In charging him with a very definite mission, God had endowed him for it. Until the end of his life, he had a marvellous fascination for the young, a phenomenal moral magnetism. We should like to find a milder term, but there is none. It was enough for him to come into contact with boys to attach them to himself.

One morning, during his first journey to Rome, in 1858, he was discussing the best way of bringing up children well with Cardinal Tosti, when he stated his great first principle:

" You see, your Eminence, it is impossible to bring up children rightly, unless you win their confidence and love."

" But how is it to be won? " asked the Cardinal.

" By doing all one can to bring the children into touch with oneself, by breaking all the hindrances that keep them at a distance."

" And how are we to bring them into touch with us? "

" By getting into touch with them, your Eminence; by trying to accommodate ourselves to their tastes, by making ourselves like them. Look, what do you say to passing from theory to practice? Tell me where we can find a good troop of children in Rome."

" In Piazza delle Terme, or in Piazza del Popolo."

" Very well, let us go to Piazza del Popolo."

They tell the coachman, and in ten minutes they are in the Piazza del Popolo. Don Bosco gets out of the carriage, and the Cardinal remains looking out of the window.

A batch of urchins are in the square, in full play. Don Bosco goes up to them, and all run away. A pretty success, this! thinks the Cardinal, looking through his window.

But Don Bosco is not beaten. With a kindly gesture, and with a winning appeal he calls the children. After a slight hesitation, several of them come slowly towards him. Don Bosco gives them a little present, asks them about their families, their school, and their game. On seeing the priest looking so debonair amidst their companions, the wildest of them begin to come back. Then: " Come, boys," says Don Bosco, " go on with your game, and let me join in." And, tucking up his cassock a little, there he is, wholly given up to the game. No common sight

this, and it attracts from all quarters other boys who happen to be loitering by. Don Bosco welcomes them all very kindly, says a few friendly words to them, offers them a medal, and gently asks some of them if they ever say any prayers or go to confession.

When he is about to leave them, all of them try to keep him back; but he does not want to make the Cardinal wait too long, and the proof has been conclusive enough. Then the boys, won over in a quarter of an hour by the charity of the friendly priest, form into a procession of honour for him as far as the carriage, which drives off through two rows of young Romans cheering Don Bosco to the echo.

" Well, you see," then says the Saint to the Cardinal.

Yes, he had indeed seen how his companion, in a few minutes, had won over these shy youngsters. Thus was it always when Don Bosco met with a band of boys.

This natural gift was strengthened by all that attentive and acquisitive mind gathered from his environment. From Becchi he carried away with him an ideal of family life and of the spiritual government of souls by kindness, which never failed to influence him. At Castelnuovo and at Chieri, as we have seen, he vowed not to be like the very dignified but stand-offish priests who took no interest in his boyish pranks. " An educator," as he thought even then, " must take part in the whole of the life of his pupils."

Later on, he was not above putting himself to school under others or taking advantage of the work of those who had gone before him. To draw up the Rules used in his own Houses, how many other Rules of flourishing institutions did he consult, how many foundations, similar to his own, did he visit! Most probably he read St. Francis de Sales, Fénelon, and perhaps Dupanloup, so far as these great directors of souls had committed the pith of their teaching to writing.

Before attaining to maturity, his educational ideas, which also felt their way, were able to take advantage of all his unfortunate experiences. He advised his disciples to keep notebooks for recording their fruitless experiments, blunders, and even their faults; he had done this himself.

Finally and above all, as two of his biographers observe, his educational instinct enabled him to catch the breeze and, in an age as intolerant of absolutism as it was alive to the importance of the heart and head, to adapt himself marvellously to the demands of contemporary

tendencies. Thus it was that his educational ideas gradually took shape. Here follow the main lines of their development.

As the basis of all Christian education, as its solid, though insufficient, foundation, the Saint insisted upon unremitting supervision. The Salesian, he said, must make it morally impossible for the child to sin, by the most careful attention, above all by loving watchfulness. He must perpetually live amidst his pupils. How? As a superintendent? As an usher? No: as a father, who never leaves his children alone, till they know how to use their freedom.

This *Preventive System*, as he called it, opposed to the other, the *Repressive System*, based upon punishment, endeavours to dry up the evil at its source, by cutting off the occasion, or by neutralising it, or by putting boys on their guard against it.

The other system said to the boy: "Never mind, but don't break the rules, for, if you do, this is what you are in for." But this system whispers: "Look out! Here is the dangerous temptation: keep steady, and overcome the difficulty; and if it is too hard, in your weakness rely upon my strength, for I am close by you."

The first is based upon reverential fear, the second upon loving vigilance. The first keeps the superior at a distance in splendid isolation, which he leaves only to show severity and provides the well-known parrallel lines along which masters and boys move without any risk of ever meeting; the second lifts authority from its pedestal without compromising it, and breaks down all the barriers between teacher and pupil, thus becoming all things to all persons.

Under the Repressive System, with the help of an icy expression, threatening looks, and a distant and reserved bearing, one lives a quiet life; and one's task is simplified. Under the Preventive System, which brings master and boy constantly together, there is only one way of maintaining one's prestige: it is to be a saint.

To impress this self-sacrificing method on the mind of his Sons, Don Bosco assured them that the practice of it yielded three sure results: the pupils remain attached to their masters all their lives, none of them degenerate while under their care, the contagion of evil stops at the door of the school, and, since the heart is won, the deepest and innermost springs of character are also reached and revivified.

In such teaching, he took a large personal share so that his collaborators might catch its spirit by seeing it with their own eyes. It was during times of recreation that one could best learn to admire his educational zeal. The boys used to say that he was the soul of their games; and no praise was more fully merited. He was to be seen in every part of the playground, hurrying wherever he was most needed. If he saw a game turning into a quarrel, he went up to the most heated disputants, spoke to the ringleader, and said quietly: " Come, just take a hand in that game over there, they are short of a player. I will take your place." And he would play at marbles or bowls or racing or at any game, to the great delight of his new companions.

If he found in some other part of the ground a boy using bad language and behaving badly, he would say: " Come here, and take my place; I want to have a try at your game." And the change was made quite easily.

Thus Don Bosco would pass from one game to another, with his eyes ever on the watch, and winning game after game, for he was an unrivalled player, gaining the unfailing admiration of his schoolboy playmates.

He would often challenge the whole school to a race. Having selected the winning post, arranged all the competitors in a row, and tucked up his soutane, he would cry: " One two, three, and off! " When they were near the post, with a spurt he would leave the crowd behind and would come in easily first. The last challenge of this sort occurred in 1868, when he was fifty-three. He was suffering from varicose veins, but no matter: he wanted to entertain his youngsters. And even at that age, he left seven hundred of them behind him. Those who were looking on could scarcely believe their eyes.

But in spite of his zealous watchfulness, Don Bosco could not stop some boys going astray. Then, what was to be done in the way of punishment? The Saint acknowledged readily that, on occasions, willingly or compulsorily, severity must be used, perhaps not as often as people say, but sometimes nevertheless. He then required the punishment to be in accordance with the principle of the system. *It must take care not to harden the heart of the boy, and thus close it against the positive work of education.* In virtue of this principle, punishments, in his Houses, must have the following characteristics: *they were to be deferred as much as possible; they were to be neither humiliating or irritating;*

they were to be reasonable; they were to be prompted by kindness, with an appeal, as far as possible, to the heart of the child. No public punishments, or hardly any; no irritating corporal punishments; even expulsions, made inevitable by scandals or obstinate disobedience, were carried out with consideration; no punishments for slight and thoughtless offences; no general punishments when the culprit could not be traced; no uniform rule applying a fixed scale without regard for the degree of the offender's culpability; no chastisements to be inflicted while in anger. But an abundant use of the sort of punishments a mother can inflict so adroitly: an expression of disapproval, a cold or indifferent remark, and rebukes winning the rational acceptance of the erring one. He often used to say that a punishment is beneficial as soon as its reasonableness is perceived by the child. " For boys," he said, " everything may be used as a punishment which they regard as such. A word of praise to one who has deserved it, a word of blame to one who has forgotten himself, may often be a real reward or a real punishment."

" One day when I went to see Don Bosco," writes Count Connestable, " I found him at his desk looking through a list of boys' names.

" ' Here,' he said, ' are all my pupils who leave something to be desired.' "

" I knew but little of the great educator's method, and so I asked him:

" What punishment will you give them? "

" ' What punishment! Why, none at all, my dear Count. Look: this is what I am going to do. The worst of the lot is this one; good at heart, but his head — Oh, what a head! Very well. Presently I shall go down to recreation and, taking him aside, I shall ask him about his health.' "

" ' All right,' he will reply at once."

" ' So you are really quite pleased with yourself? I shall say, looking him straight in the face.' "

" ' At this unexpected and plain question, he will stand abashed for a moment; then he will cast his eyes downwards, blush and keep an uneasy silence. Then, I shall continue in an affectionate tone:

" ' Come! I see that, though your body is well, perhaps your soul is poorly. How long is it since you last went to confession? Well,

don't answer. Your silence tells me a good deal. Promise me to settle up matters as soon as possible, won't you, my boy? ' "

" ' A few minutes later you will find the boy in the confessional, and I bet you anything you like that there will be no more complaints about him.' "

One evening after the holidays, the boys at the Oratory failed to keep silence for Don Bosco to speak after prayers. Without showing any impatience, he waited a minute or two; the talking went on. Then he remarked very simply: " I am not pleased with you: go to bed. I shall say nothing to you tonight." From that day onward he never had to make use of the little bell, which usually was rung to reduce his audience to silence.

Some may think: this constant supervision, however paternal, must necessarily make hypocrites, always hanging round their masters. No: because this system of education allows the boy to be open, to reveal himself, to strike out on his own; it gives him as much freedom as possible. Of discipline it keeps as much as is needed for the regular carrying on of the house; for all the rest, it shuts its eyes. It has no idolatry for order, that wonderful external order, easily identified with immobility and silence, which some people think is the sum total of education. It is only a means thereto. The end is the education of the child. Now if, in any way, that end is hindered or interfered with by a too rigid application of the means, we must not hesitate, we must modify the means. Don Bosco wanted his discipline to help towards education, not to be a discipline exercised for its own sake, for securing the admiration of the beholders, or for the sake of providing the master with a quiet life. The hearts and souls of boys must expand and reveal themselves by the free play of their activities, for, to make progress, the educator must thoroughly know his subjects; an ill-devised discipline must not therefore cramp their spontaneity. Moreover, human nature is not fundamentally perverted, as some people will have it, nor instinctively impelled to do what is right, as others claim. Hence, let us not rush to extremes: let us not ruthlessly curtail the freedom of the young; and let us not free them from all restraints. Excessive severity, extreme laxity, these are two reefs we have to pass between, neither by tyrannising over wills nor by passively looking on at their free play, but by giving the boy that indispensable collaboration which will enable

him some day to do without it. By thus lightening discipline of the useless burden that overloaded it, you will considerably diminish the number of its breaches, reduce the punishments inflicted on your pupils to a minimum, free your master from fruitless labours and make school life agreeable.

This respect for the freedom of the boy, Don Bosco carried into all spheres. In chapel, there were no general communions, row after row. There were no confessions on fixed dates, one class on one Saturday, and another on the next; no grand uniform rules, rigid and unalterable, the application of which may stimulate the admiration of the beholder, but does much harm to souls. In a Salesian chapel, at the time for Communion, whoever will rises to communicate without any set order, and this guarantees his freedom; and the confessors, who are present at each office, wait in their confessionals for the penitents who freely come to them. The examples of the fervent and the private exhortations of the masters are the only external pressure brought to bear upon the young people's free will.

In the playground, there is the same spirit of freedom. Every boy has to play: that is the part assigned to discipline. But what a variety there is in the games! And how free they are to amuse themselves in their own way!

In the classroom, there is no formality or pomposity. Here, as in all schools, lessons must be well learnt, and exercises have to undergo pitiless correction; but the atmosphere is quite paternal. The boy's spontaneity is given *carte blanche*. Remarks, questions, objections are not cut short on their lips by an icy look from the master. A joke, a humorous story, a lively episode, are part of the daily fare.

You might go round, and wherever you found the boys, at prayers or work or play, you would find the great educator's skill, in combining authority with liberty, discipline with friendliness, order with youthful effervescence. His aim was to reproduce the family atmosphere, which is indispensable to human beings. And success seemed to follow almost of its own accord.

A touching scene was afforded every night, after supper, by the room in which Don Bosco took his modest meal with his collaborators. Usually he was late, and had to go on with his scanty supper for a few minutes after the rest. The boys knew this; hence, flocking together

from all sides round the door, they watched for the least interruption in the departure of their superiors to pour into the refectory in a torrent. Woe to anyone who then wanted to go out! He had to squeeze in against the wall and to let the stream rush by. These impish youngsters invaded every corner of the room, and once inside, taking up any position they could get, they delighted in watching their Father. The first, of course, faced their way to his side, so close that their heads seemed to rest on his shoulders; others stood behind, with their elbows on the back of his chair. Many of them, with a disconcerting lack of ceremony, leapt on to the tables, and took triumphant possession of them, some sitting with their legs crossed, others kneeling behind them, and the last arrivals standing. Meanwhile, others seized the forms and set them against the walls, climbing upon them and using them as observation posts. The last of the crowd filled up the remaining free spaces between the forms and the table. No room left now, you think, for anyone else to get near Don Bosco. But you are mistaken. Here are the smallest " kids " slipping through and creeping on all fours under the table! Suddenly, up their little heads quite close to Don Bosco, who smiles upon their " cheeky " appearance. How charming looks this bunch of children round their beloved Father! Is he not the one of whom the Psalmist speaks in the verse: In the heart of thy home, the children round they table sturdy as olive-branches? Certainly, the proprieties have suffered some shock from his spontaneous outpouring of affection; but not one of these boys shows the slightest want of respect in his manifestation of love for his good benefactor. Now look once more. He is making a sign that he wants to speak: immediately there is perfect silence, and, while the whole throng is hanging on his lips, the good Father tells them a story or an arresting anecdote, or asks them a riddle or puts other questions to them, and the charm of what he is saying holds them till the bell for night prayers sends them regretfully from his presence. Truly, this sort of education, as an intimate friend of Don Bosco once observed, is indeed that of the saints; it alone can reveal to the master a boy's character and enable him to develop a pupil's hidden energies.

To surround these young folks with the warmth and light they needed, the Saint tried in every possible way to plunge them in a permanent atmosphere of joy. He counted upon joy to expand the soul,

to banish boredom, to impart a thrill of life, to quicken the intelligence, to associate the notion of pleasure, in the boy's mind, with that of duty, and, above all, to fill his heart with a sense of confidence and abandonment. To what extremities would he not go to keep it fully alive amongst his children! At the Oratory, they still remember the mad games of " Follow-the-leader " which he started or led himself in the playground.

Getting his six or seven hundred boys into two long lines, he took the lead himself, striking up a Piedmontese refrain. All filed off behind one another, joining in the tune, marking the rhythm by stamping with their heels smartly or with loud hand claps. It made a diabolical noise, and beneath the porticoes the great granite flags resounded heavily to the measured tramp of the marching files. Thus the long serpent wound its way in and out almost everywhere; sometimes out into the playground, sometimes back under the arcades; now upstairs and along the corridor, then downstairs again; and, at another time, they would circle round a tree, making the queerest patterns. At last, with hoarse voices and worn-out legs, they came to a standstill, pleased to have run wild for a quarter of an hour with Don Bosco.

Sometimes he would take another line. He began by drawing up his boys in a row, and then shouted: " Listen! All of you must do whatever I do. Whoever fails to copy me is out of the game." Then he would fling himself into the most motley performances of the harlequin type, and all his postures were reproduced by his delightful band who followed him in Indian line, while the other boys stood in rows looking on in the hightest amusement.

And the long line went through every part of the Oratory, reaching the remotest corners, slipping through the darkest places, and gathering on its way the few isolated gangs who were shirking the games.

Thus Don Bosco secured two results: he had entertained his boys, and patrolled the whole playground without appearing to do it, preventing any infraction of divine law.

He wanted to have joy everywere, not only in recreation and when the boys were out of school, but also when they were at lessons. Acting appears to have been regarded with some alarm by Mgr. Dupanloup; it was not so with Don Bosco, who was the first of modern educators to set up his stage about 1847. In his Houses, music, in every form,

was given a front rank. He would have approved of the maxim of the modern philosopher: Children and youths should be brought up *in hymnis et canticis.*

To this end he did his best to make the chapel attractive, both by the beauty of worship and by getting all who attended the services to take their share in the singing. There were no Masses followed in an appalling silence, but prayers recited aloud and interspersed with hymns; no long and irksome exercises causing lassitude, but short services attractive ceremonies, with music, flowers and lights. And to keep all the boys quiet and attentive, he never shrank from introducing any innovation, provided that the dignity of God's house were not injured by it. But it was above all by confidence and love sustaining Christian devotion that he made the chapel a house of sweet and fervent prayer, in which his boys could spend a time of joy and happiness. Formerly, in the days of Jansen, people used to say: " Adore God; tremble in His presence." Don Bosco following Fénelon, said: " Try to make the young delight in God."

It is easy to see how such joy, pervading the House, enlarged a boy's heart, and stimulated and maintained his confidence. Now, confidence, said the Saint, is everything in education. Nothing solid is done, unless the child has given up his heart. All the rest prepares the way and leads on to this, which is the essential thing — the child's heart must be captured. This is the central point of every system of education, the problem of authority. What place did he give it? Or rather — for he wanted it to be as important as anyone does — on what would he base it?

On force, physically imposed? On fear of punishment or of humiliation? On reason, which acknowledges the justice of the command? On faith, which regards the orders as coming from God? Neither on force nor on fear, *as far as that might be*; on reason and on faith, *as soon as that might be.* But that was not always feasible, at least at the outset of the enterprise; in the case of little fellows who were distraught or woolgathering, in the case of lads deep in sin or tyrannised over by it, in the case of the currupted minds that could not distinguish between good and evil, he gave his orders in the name of love. His authority was that of love, the authority of the man and teacher whom the pupil does not want to grieve, the authority of the father who

holds his children's hearts in his keeping, of the elder brother who has but to make a sign to be better obeyed than anyone else. *Without affection, there is no confidence, and without confidence, no education,* was one of Don Bosco's constant sayings. He would have gladly summed up his entire method in these words: *Make yourself loved to make God more loved.*

This affection and confidence he asked of his Sons, and he taught them to his disciples; but above all he deserved them both. By what means? His life has taught us.

Would you be loved? he said; then love. And even that is not enough; take a further step; not only must you love your pupils; you must make them feel that you love them. And how are they to feel that? Listen to your own heart; it will tell you.

First, there must be no barriers between pupil and master, no keeping at a distance, no outbursts of anger, no blows, no public humiliation. But there must be mutual sympathy in both hearts, a family spirit, watchful and active kindliness, lenient towards weakness or ignorance, mercy which can shut its eyes and not punish on all occasions, but pardon easily — that constant care for the boy which makes one take an interest in his health, his parents, his needs, his troubles, his progress and his joys — protective vigilance, that shields him from the stone of scandal as well as from the roughness of the weather — real and expressed affection — constant, but maternal, supervision — readiness to think out whatever may enliven, inform or expand a boy's life — gentleness that never raises its voice, and has an ever ready smile amidst the worst mischances, which can punish with a look of sadness, a mouth that says nothing, a face that turns away — confidence, shown in a host of ways, and infallibly attracting confidence in return — condescension, which opens the door wide to the little boy of ten as if he were a grown man — healthy familiarity, which joins in the boy's games and childish amusements: all these things, and how many others besides, are contained in that too often misused, but divine word: love.

The great educator has resumed all this procedure in two famous words. To himself he said: *Make thyself loved if thou wouldst be obeyed.* To his Sons, he said: *Be not superiors, but fathers.*

He was a Father to all his children. Of him a great social worker of Turin once remarked, not without a touch of envy " There is at

No. 32, Cottolengo Street, what is nowhere else to be found, even in religious communities; a room out of which goes forth radiant with joy the boy or youth who entered it with a heart full of weariness or bitterness: it is Don Bosco's room."

What use did Don Bosco make of the boy's confidence when all this kindness and patience had won it? He employed the invincible authority of love to raise him gently and sweetly towards the world of the supernatural. That was the end he had in view: to establish perseverance in right living, based upon sound devotion, when the lad came across temptations to evil at every turn in his after career.

But, on this ground as upon all the rest, he wanted reason and faith to direct and control the way. There must be piety, of course, but it must be sustained by a body of religious truths, which could alone suffice and more than suffice to prevent utter shipwreck. This is why religious teaching was given the first place in his House. He tried in every possible way to permeate his boys with it. The lessons were short, but lively, vivid and practical — catechisms, well prepared but followed with attention, five-minute sermons after evening prayers, leaving in the heart a serious thought to sleep over — terse readings after Mass or before Benediction — religious or moral hints, naturally summing up whatever was met with, either in school or playtime, a passage of Virgil or a good story told during recreation — a frequent reminder of fundamental truths, not dragged in tiresomely, but aptly suggested by the ingenuity or readiness of the teacher: everything was tried and tested and made use of to drive into the boys' little heads a living doctrine that was sufficiently nourishing and powerful to protect them in the day of evil when it came.

Such piety did its best, and almost always successfully, to make religion attractive, and not irksome or boring. For these little Catholics of the nineteenth century, the Church became once more what it was to our ancestors of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the house that so captured men's hearts, by making them feel the sweetness of God's presence therein, that they ran to it instinctively, in hours of temptation or wretchedness, of discouragement or of deep sorrow, as to their natural refuge.

And what was the final object of this solid religious instruction and this attractive piety? To bring the young into early touch with the

three great springs of the supernatural life: *Confession, Communion, and Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.*

Most wonderful is the way in which Don Bosco insisted all his life long upon the practice of Confession. He was always returning to it in his " Good nights [1]." Under the porticoes of the House, he had texts of Scripture painted in big letters, for he wanted to engrave them for life upon the memory of his boys; and three out of four of them referred to the sacrament of Penance. Next to the holy Curé of Ars, one may surely assert that Don Bosco heard more confessions than any other man of his time. As Huysmans says: " He heard confessions in church, in the open air, in the corner of a room, and we have it on record that this wonderful Priest heard confessions in the field that he had hired when all his landlords one after another, had turned him out of their houses. He used to sit on a little mound, and, not far off, in a circle round him, his boys were kneeling down and preparing to confess their unshriven faults or omissions. And we see Don Bosco, with his good old country rector's cheery face, taking the penitent who had finished his self-examination, putting his left arm round him, and laying the boy's head lightly against his heart; he was no longer now a judge; but a father who was helping his son to make the confession which is often so painful in the case of the least of sins."

And with his deep insight into the soul of the child, knowing well how little attention he can give, he never pushed his counsels too far; just two or three words, but those axactly right and suited to the spiritual state of the penitent, that was all he had to carry away besides absolution. That was enough to keep him safe and sound until the next confession. The Saint, too, made up for lost ground, in the matter of general confessions. His zeal contrived to extract them from penitents whom he did not know, or whom he felt to be uneasy or disturbed as to their relations with God, when he had thus obtained a clean breast as to their past lives, he was quite easy in mind about the penitent who had confided it to him; he was sure of keeping him, guiding him, and winning him over to God.

To help him in the work, he reckoned upon the twofold strength

1 Short familiar talks which the Superior gives every night to his boys after prayers.

at the service of the Catholic in his fight with evil: the Eucharist and the assistance of the Mother of God. From the first days of his sacerdotal ministry, Don Bosco was a strong advocate of early and frequent Communion. In our days, there is no great merit in making souls communicate soon and often: Rome has spoken, and that is enough. But how about fifty or sixty years ago? Now from the year 1847, Don Bosco, in the first days of his Oratory, urged frequent Communion; and thus he wrote more than sixty years ago: " When a child can distinguish between common and Eucharistic bread, when he has learnt enough, we must not trouble about his age; the King of heaven must come to reign in his heart." The Eucharist is the first pillar of salvation.

The second is devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. All his life, that was what he preached. His mother's advice on the morning of his taking the cassock: " If you become a priest some day, propagate devotion to the Blessed Virgin incessantly," that is what he did until his last day. Three days before he died, almost with his last breath, he murmured to his disciples: " From the pulpit, and in your conversations, insist upon devotion to the Blessed Virgin and upon frequent Communion." He felt that, with the two shields of the Eucharist and the Virgin Mary, however much the virtue of his Sons might be ambushed or attacked, it would overcome the worst temptations.

This was confirmed for him in a mysterious dream which he had one night in May, 1862. He saw, tossed on a wild sea and attacked by furious enemies, a flotilla of small craft, symbolising his old pupils scattered all over the world. They could only escape from the enemy and from shipwreck by mooring their craft, behind the admiral's ship with the Pope on board, to two gigantic pillars rising above the raging waves: one had a Host on top of it, and the other a statue of the Virgin Mary.

This late stroke must provide the final touch to our brief sketch of Don Bosco's method of teaching. From the very outset, it aimed at one thing only: to help its subjects to live in the grace of God, as the friends of Christ and His Holy Mother, so that, amidst the dreadful battle of the passions, they might stand fast, keep the law of God, and save their souls.

We must not conclude this concise account of our educational system without answering a question asked by many. The tree is known by its fruit: what fruit is borne by this tree?

At any rate it secures this: it binds all those who have received it to the Oratory that has given it, and that by a powerful and pleasant bond. For them, the Boarding School is no longer the *Jail of young prisoners*, as Montaigne calls it, but the kindly House in which life has flowed on like a dream, passing from one feeling to another, but all of them pure, all of them potent. They return to it with gladness, and with the old masters who are always awaiting them they exchange such heavenly conversation as touches the soul to its depths.

It may be that the armour does not always sufficiently protect the wearers who have put it on. The assaults of evil are sometimes powerful enough to fell the best of fighters. More than one old pupil of Don Bosco did not stick to the path marked out for him by his trainer, who was nevertheless undisturbed as to the final issue of the fray. It is not for nothing that, when a boy's heart is pure and tender, he has learnt to love Jesus Christ and His Mother: memories revive. Almost always an hour struck when the prodigal knelt once more, at least in desire, in the tribunal of Penance.

Such prodigals Don Bosco had, and more of them than one might suppose. Shall we say, for instance, how many members of his Oratory were left after the rebellion of 1846, which tried to enrol them under the new leaders? Twelve. Twelve out of five hundred. And in the halcyon days of the Oratory, when Don Bosco himself acknowledged that its walls hid behind them wonders of sanctity, was it not one of his disciples, Father Francesia, who spoke of " the poor strayed ones who obstinately refused to take advantage of the lessons and counsels of the great Servant of God? " There is also the strange dream, called the " Dream of the Wheel," in which, through a huge magnifying glass, Don Bosco discovers the spiritual state of his children. Now, amongst them, he perceives some with a hole in their tongues on account of their evil talk; others with hateful ulcers on their necks showing that they are the slaves of their own whims; others with worms swarming in their hearts, as symbolising the shameful passions that are eating into them; some, again, are completely deaf, that is to say they refuse to hearken to any exhortation to goodness, and others have their lips fastened by a padlock, because they hide their sins in confession. And the procession of these physical diseases goes on pitilessly and terribly, because each of them discloses some triumphant vice. A moment comes

when the dreamer can hold out no longer; and a cry of grief breaks from his lips: " Are these poor wretches all lost, then? Is it possible? And that the day after a retreat! What is the use, then, of my work and toil and advice? Ah! if I had only known it! "

Then, directing his eyes towards another scene, the Saint sees a host of children playing in a plain.

" Do you see that crowd? " asks a voice.

" Yes. Who are they? "

" These are the Sons our Lord is keeping for you to comfort you for the others. For every prodigal, you will count a hundred of these."

The future often realised this prediction. The Oratory of St. Francis de Sales sheltered dozens of boys and lads whose virtue, as Don Bosco said, was equal to that of St. Aloysius. Once, in 1878, Father Vespignani, who was twenty years the Provincial of the Salesian Houses in the Argentine, asked Don Bosco:

" Is it true that some of your Oratory boys are pure as St. Aloysius? "

" Yes, it is quite true."

" Could you mention the names of any of them? "

" Yes, here is one, for instance, and here is another."

The two names belonged to a little Irish boy and to a young Italian. The Irish boy is dead, but the Italian is still alive, tormented by a cruel illness which he endures with a smile.

One evening of September, 1862, while talking to some young religious, Don Bosco confided this to them: " I can assure you we shall have boys who will be raised to the altar. If only Dominic Savio, who died five years ago, goes on working miracles, I do not doubt, if I can set his cause going, that the Church will one day recognise his sanctity." As we know, the prophecy has already been fulfilled.

Another time, speaking of the young folks of his Oratory which God was favouring with special gifts, he said: " There is within these walls a soul of remarkable purity, with which the Blessed Virgin loves to converse, to which she reveals strange things, either hidden or future. When I desire to get some light upon the future, I recommend myself to his prayers, but in such a way as not to awaken his vanity. He refers the matter to the Virgin Mary, and brings me back her reply in all simplicity. I act in the same way when I want some favour."

If from the quality of its results we pass to the numerical quantity achieved by his method, the Saint tells us: " It succeeds to the extent of ninety per cent. And in the ten per cent which appear to be unaffected by it, it yet has some real influence; it makes them less harmful."

And now let us take the declaration of a recognised authority. The celebrated Crispi, who directed Italian policy for so many years, once — about 1878 — thought of entrusting the Turin Reformatory to Don Bosco and his Sons. The Servant of God consented upon four conditions: complete freedom in matters of religion, dismissal of the warders, unity of government, a daily subsidy of about sixpence a head. Everything was ready, and nothing remained to be obtained but the ministerial signature, when Crispi refused to sign on this ground: " I know Don Bosco; he is quite capable of turning all the offenders into priests. Well, we have too many of them as it is."

This saying of Crispi's reminds us of another. It is Cavour who gives us this bitter epigram in condemnation of the opposite method: " In a state of siege, any ass can govern." Repression is easy, and it requires hardly any apprenticeship. But to prevent evil effectively, you want all the loving diligence, all the watchful care of a paternal heart: docility on the one side will only increase with the increase of devotion on the other. It is only by constant self-discipline, by his daily endeavours to become more earnest, more patient, more fully master of himself, that the educator secures the happiness of dispensing with hateful punishments and of winning obedience from the grateful and affectionate.

Have we not now sketched a nineteenth-century reproduction of Jesus Christ's famous portrait of the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep and leads them, who does not flee when the wolf comes, who never rests until he has brought back everyone of the flock into the fold, and who daily and hourly devotes his whole life to them?

Have we not here, indeed, a practical realisation of St. Paul's famous eulogy of divine Charity? " Charity is patient, is kind; charity feels no envy; charity is never perverse or proud, never insolent; does not claim its rights, cannot be provoked, does not brood over an injury; takes no pleasure in wrong-doing, but rejoices at the victory of truth; sustains, believes, hopes, endures, to the last . . . We shall never have finished with charity."

Trials

We know Mother Margaret's words to her son on the day of his first Mass: " My son, never forget this: to begin saying Mass is to begin to suffer." The whole of Don Bosco's life went to prove them. Of ordinary human suffering he had his share, and a liberal share. An orphan at the age of two; his infancy was spent in penury; as a lad, he met at every step with impediments in the way of his true vocation; at Chieri, a poor student, he had to struggle with staitened circumstances and extra work. At last he becomes a priest: then his trials increase tenfold. Everywhere he is driven out; the Marchesa di Barolo dismisses him, friends question his sanity, authority harasses him, poverty settles in his home, and illness keeps him away from his adopted family for six months. We are only at the outset of his career, and he has already suffered more than most. Afterwards, when his Oratory has been established, when it has grown far and wide, and his undertakings are crowned with success, he apparently has to pay for all this by an increase of troubles. His mother dies too soon, his helpers one after another leave him in the lurch, his first buildings tumble down, money keeps falling short, and suspicion dogs his enterprises. Later on he has to cope with the overstrain entailed by his superhuman toil, the ingratitude and defection of some of his sons, thirty years of persistent endeavour to secure Rome's full recognition of his Congregation, and hosts of other anxieties which his best disciples could hardly share. All his life long, suffering was as faithful a companion to him as it was hard-hearted; it rarely left him; and, sometimes, it hurled itself upon him with an obstinate fury which would be disconcerting did we not

know that those whom Jesus Christ loves most, most intimately participate in His Passion.

How he suffered, for instance, from the desertion of certain of his Sons. Those too, upon whom he had founded steadfast and priceless hopes. If we examine into the beginnings of the Congregations he established, we are surprised at the rather poor quality of the material which he flung into the foundations. How could the edifice stand on such precarious footings? the worldly-wise may ask. Faithful to his apostolic first principle, *Il meglio è nemico del bene*, Don Bosco went ahead with whatever men or resources were at his command; he did good as soon as he could, and as he could; he kindled his fire with all kinds of wood. Nevertheless, we must admit that from the outset, to help him in his undertakings, Heaven sent him choice subjects: Rua, Albera, Cagliero, Cerutti, Durando, Francesia, Fagnano, and many others. These remained faithful to the end. But there were others, not less brilliant, apparently men of solid virtue, certainly called to follow him and to become pillars of the great and growing Oratory, who, for reasons not always radiant, left him in the lurch. We are not speaking of the old pupils who were traitors to his teaching and went over to the enemy; but of the first boys whom he fed and educated to be his colloborators, and who transferred all their stock of learning and character to the official schools of teaching or to the diocese in which they were born. For many of them Don Bosco had made great sacrifices; not only had he brought them up gratis, but he had afterwards secured them the leisure and the financial assistance required for a University training and for obtaining one or more doctor's degrees. He thought: tomorrow these young religious will render me great services, either as heads of Houses or as teachers of the higher humanities. But, unhappily, more than one of them was tempted by the world or by the promise of a more brilliant career; a few came to fancy — but only after they secured their degrees — that they had a good deal to endure at Don Bosco's both in the matter of food and of clothing, and of much else; others could not get rid of faults that were injurious to the general harmony: none of them had any faith in their master or in the solidity of his work, and they left him. It was not very noble, but it was human; and it was very grievous to the apostle.

In the face of such cases of desertion Don Bosco, who often saw

into the future, was anxious solely for the destiny of those who had set their course in a wrong direction.

" There is our colleague, Father X — well paid out! " said one of his assistants in 1862 in Don Bosco's presence. " A fistula in the mouth; that is what he is in for."

" What does the doctor say? " asked the Servant of God.

" Just what I tell you. Nevertheless, he is allowing him to join the Capuchins. Do you think he is likely to get worse? "

" Certainly, X — wants to give himself airs; but he won't succeed."

" Tell us what you mean, Don Bosco."

" Do you know how he has managed to join the Capuchins? "

" Very indefinitely."

" Well, it was like this. Our good friend formerly asked to be admitted among us. I approved, and he became a Salesian. The first few years everything went swimmingly: I found a charitable person who paid all the cost of his clerical education, clothes, books and fees, and even promised, the day before his ordination, to provide his ecclesiastical maintenance. One day there was a sudden change: counting upon this security, he showed a desire to leave us. I tried to dissuade him. I made use of his friends, of Cagliero in particular, to persuade him that God would surely punish such an act of ingratitude as his. Nothing came of this: he was obstinate. And then, as you see, he got that ring of abscesses round his neck. The whole of the autumn of 1861 and of the winter of 1862 he suffered from that distressing and humiliating affliction. Then, more than once, as I remember, he came to see me, and one day asked me if he would get well, if he gave up the idea of leaving us. I answered: ' Go back to the path to which God is calling you, and I promise you that you will be well in a week.' He took my advice, and in a week the suppuration stopped; the disease had disappeared. Everything went on all right for a few months, and then his restored health made him forget his promise; he went back to his old plan. His glandular inflammation returned in a worse form, and went on without a check; even in his own home, even at the Seminary at Bra, the scrofula clung to him. You tell me that the ill is now getting worse, and that he is threatened with fistula: I am not surprised to hear it."

" Don Bosco, do you think our poor friend will come to a bad end? "

" No, no; he is a good fellow, and so he will remain."

" Perhaps, however, the goodness of God may be overtaxed at last, and who can say whether he may not become a bad priest? "

" He will never come to that."

" Will he give up the cassock? "

" No."

Don Bosco's silence might have suggested that such an end would perhaps prevent other misfortunes.

The refugee became a priest, a professor of moral theology, and a parish priest; he was always very devout and his conduct was exemplary. But he died while still young, of consumption, of which the scrofula was but an early manifestation.

While trials thus tested the young Congregation, and more than one fine fig was shaken from the tree, calumny fell upon the growing Oratory and tried to ruin it in public esteem. We have already heard how two ruthless perquisitions in the spring of 1860 were made at the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, which then numbered more than three hundred pupils in the humanities. A Brief, in which Pius IX thanked Don Bosco for an affectionate letter giving news of his religious, and a note, seized by the *Black Cabinet*, in which the Archbishop, in exile at Lyons, asked Don Bosco for the safest means of sending him a confidential circular meant for the parish clergy of the archdiocese, had alarmed the public authorities. In their eyes the Oratory was a centre of conspiracy: thence emanated a continuous correspondence informing the Pope of all that the revolution was plotting; there a quantity of lads were being taught reactionary principles, and behind those walls were hidden arms and ammunition for striking a sudden blow. These calumnies led to a perquisition on May 26, the eve of Pentecost, and early in the afternoon a band of police officers descended upon the Oratory and intimated to Don Bosco the order to search his domicile which they had received.

" Please show me the actual words of your order," courteously said he, " otherwise I much regret that I shall not be able to let you go through these premises."

" We shall soon see about that," replied one of the officers.

" Surely," said Don Bosco, " you would never dare to use force. I am only a private citizen, but under the terms of the constitution my domicile is inviolable. As long as you give me no proof of your being

sent by authority I am against the perquisition, and I reserve all my rights."

They had to bow before this perfectly legitimate request. One of the officials ran to the Ministry to fetch the order for the perquisition, which included Don Cafasso too, Don Bosco's holy confessor, and Count Cays, one of his best friends, President of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul at Turin, and another priest. All four were suspected of being in compromising relations with the Jesuits, then exiled from the Kingdom, the Archbishop Fransoni, and the Roman Curia. If there were any certain proofs of their culpability, they must be arrested immediately.

And so the perquisition began. Scarcely had he entered his room, when Don Bosco was searched from head to foot without the least respect. His patience was so far disturbed that he muttered the words taken from the Gospel of the Passion: *Et cum scelestis reputatus est.*

" What did you say? " asked the officer.

" I am saying that you are paying me the same attention as some people once paid to our Lord."

After this regular search, they went through the furniture of the two rooms from top to bottom. The wastepaper basket received particular attention, but the famous *corpus delicti* never turned up. At last, aggravated at the result of their domiciliary visit, the head of the trio said to Don Bosco:

" Come, don't make us waste our time; hand us over the papers."

" What papers? "

" Those we want."

" I can't give you what I do not possess."

" Have you no papers showing you relations with the Jesuits, the Archbishop and the Pope? "

" I tell you I have nothing; if you don't believe me, let me alone. Do I look like a fool? "

" Certainly not."

" And you would have it, that I have in hand at the present moment papers such as those you are talking about. If I had ever had them, they would long ago have been destroyed or put away in safety. Now, go on with your search. As for me, I have no time to waste."

And he sat down to write some letters. No sooner had he finished

them than a police officer took possession of them, whilst the two others went on with their investigations.

At one moment, they thought they had found the " corpse." Rummaging through a big box, they discovered that it had a double lock.

" What is this? "

" Well, that is a secret," said Don Bosco, with the greatest gravity.

" Secret, or no secret, it must be opened."

" Much as I regret it, I shall not open it. We have the right to keep documents hidden, if they cast any discredit on ourselves or our household. I therefore beg you not insist upon it."

" Open it, otherwise we shall smash the lock."

Out of the drawer they drew a package of bills which showed them that Don Bosco owed 7,800 francs to the baker Magra, 2,150 to the tanner who had supplied the shoemakers' workshop, and so forth. It was the debit account of the poor man, invoices for oil, rice, macaroni and other things. The police looked rather put out.

" You have been making fools of us," said the officer to Don Bosco, recognising the trick that had been played on them.

" I have not played a trick on you," he answered, " I did not wish you to find my debts; but you insisted on seeing and knowing everything. Never mind, if you would only pay a few of these bills you would be doing an act of charity."

The tragedy threatened turned into a farce.

In the files of the Saint they found the original text of Pius IX's Brief. The officer wanted to carry it off.

" I object," said Don Bosco. " It is an original document."

" But what does it matter to you, if I give you an exact copy; and here it is," said the Saint, offering them a recent issue of *Catholic Readings*.

" But this is in Italian," objected one of the men.

" You bet. The Latin is by the side, and, what is more, here you have the translation of it."

" Indeed, that is much better," remarked the man. " Italian is easier to understand."

Soon after, hunting through a wardrobe, they came upon the Collection of the Bollandists.

" What are these books? "

" They are books written by the Jesuits."

" By the Jesuits? Then we will sequestrate the lot."

" First of all, let us see what is in them," observed another officer very judiciously, alarmed at the weight of the Collection.

" They are lives of Saints, and very edifying," said Don Bosco. " Look, take this one for instance, about Saint Simeon the Stylite: it is curious, very curious. Listen. This extraordinary man, moved by the thought of hell, and thinking that he had only one soul and that he must save it at all costs, left his country, parents and friends, and withdrew into solitude. There he lived for many years at the top of a pillar, on which he had built a poor shelter. From there he preached to the multitudes reproaching the men of the world for thinking only of their pleasures, and not of the eternal punishments awaiting for their ill use of their time . . ."

" Very good; that will do," interrupted the police officers.

And the Bollandists were put back into their place.

" You gentlemen would be very obliging," said Don Bosco, at about five o'clock in the evening, " if you would kindly remember that it is the eve of Pentecost, and that I have several hundred boys to confess."

" We, too, have finished," answered one of the three. " But, tell us, Don Bosco, why our presence, which usually causes alarm, tears, outcries, and even makes some people faint, far from terrifying you, seems to keep you pleasantly amused? "

"My dear Sirs, it is because my conscience is at peace, and I am quite sure that you will find nothing compromising in my House."

And now they believe him, good fellows as they were. But it did not prevent them from using their authority to seize the evening delivery, when the concierge brought it in at half past five. The first letter they happened to open was from the Cabinet Minister of the Interior; it strongly recommended a penniless orphan to the charity of Don Bosco, for whose admission his Excellency pledged himself to pay about six pounds at once for all. The same signature was at the bottom of the order for the perquisition and of this letter. The police officers let their arms drop at their sides. Two attitudes, two expressions of countenance: it was all in the governmental policy of the time. In their confusion, the trio forgot to run through the rest of the correspondence; and it was a good thing they did so, for in it was a certain letter from Rome,

which, if perversely understood, might have given rise to heaps of difficulties for Don Bosco.

He saw this, and with quick presence of mind said to the officers: " I see you are very dirty with this nasty job; allow me to lend you this brush. And then, you are tired with your more than three hours' search; it is hot; if you agree, I will send up something to quench your thirst."

When the boys, who were playing in the yard and had been trembling for their Father's freedom for over three hours, saw the bottle and the glasses go by, they knew that Don Bosco had once more turned right round the very men who had been sent to do him harm.

After this ineffectual domiciliary visitation, Don Bosco might have considered himself clear of all suspicion from the political authorities; but far from it. A fortnight later, on June 9, at two in the afternoon, the police were calling on him again. Unfortunately, that morning he had gone out. It was upon his poor procurator, Don Alasonatti, that the committee of investigators descended. It consisted of three: the secretary of the Minister Farini, a school inspector, and a professor of the University with a degree in theology. By their manner of procedure, it soon appeared that the inquiry had three definite objects: to discover source of the means on which the Oratory lived, and to detect anything in the books, exercises, notes and copybooks of the pupils which might inculpate the teaching. To extract from the procurator a confession of secret subsidies having been provided by the Pope and the dispossessed Italian princes for the upkeep of the House, they pressed him with such malevolent questions, they used such discourteous intimidation and inflicted such vulgar insults upon him, and employed such unseemly methods, that the poor man could not stand them: he fainted. Don Bosco, whom they had sent to fetch in haste from the town, found him in that condition, insensible and sitting on a chair with the three inquisitors round him, all looking bewildered and guilty. His dignified language made them feel ashamed of their proceedings; then he placed himself at their service. A close and insidious interrogatory did not succeed in making him contradict the statements of his procurator: the Oratory had nothing to live on but the scanty pensions provided by a very small numbrer of the pupils, charitable offerings, and . . . the credit given it by the purveyers. Of secret subsidies there was not a trace.

Having taken their bearings in that direction, the inquiry appeared likely to get lost in the sands; any proofs of the charge were too poor. The inquisitors then fell back upon the teaching given to the pupils, and went through all the classes of the school, asking on every side questions which sometimes met with replies which were as adroit as they were courageous. Here are two or three of them taken at haphazard.

" How many kinds of monarchical governments do you know of? "

" Two, the absolute and the constitutional."

" Which is the best? "

" All forms of government are good, if those who exercise them are good people."

" Who killed Cæsar? "

" Brutus."

" He did well, did he not, in doing away with such a tyrant over liberty? "

" No, for a subject ought never to revolt against his ruler."

" But if the ruler does wrong? "

" God will punish him some day."

" At the very least could not a feigned attack be made upon Victor Emmanuel to make him understand that he should leave priests, bishops and the Pope in peace? "

" No, that must not be done. His subjects must only pray to God to touch his heart, and they must have patience."

" All persecutors of the Church are wretches; now, Victor Emmanuel is a persecutor of the Church; therefore . . ."

" You know the facts better than I, Sir, and that is probably why you reason that way. Don Bosco always speaks to us of the King and his ancestors with respect. What you have just said I have never heard in this House. On the contrary, lately when the King was ill, we were made to pray for his health and for his soul."

Good little fellows! Their simple and honest minds and their Catholic sense, trained in the best of schools, furnished them with such clear replies as were disconcerting. By themselves they proved to these improvised judges of teaching the baselessness of their suspicions.

After leaving the schoolrooms, they went into the kitchens to taste the food, they passed through the refectory to ascertain whether the boys ate sufficiently, they took a tour round the dormitories, hunting

into all the corners, feeling the pillows, they even went down into the cellars, hoping to find a stock of arms there; then into the church, the workshops, the schoolroom, the three enquirers made their way, opening all the drawers and cupboards and tool boxes. Nothing escaped their investigation, which lasted full seven hours and discovered but one bit of evidence, a page of Latin by Pius IX, dictated for translation to one of the classes. This page came from a well-known Encyclical, and apparently constituted a political offence. All the exercises of the class were confiscated: this was the only game the terrible hunters had been able to take home. Their bag was not quite empty, but they went off very disappointed nevertheless. " This priest is really clever," they thought. " There is no way of getting a compromising document or an incriminating admission out of him. And how his boys love him! "

From such evidence others might have inferred the innocence of the Servant of God; but they never thought of that. Moreover, Don Bosco had to undergo nine other domiciliary visits, all of them ending in similar successes. Did they expect to damp his zeal and his friendship for his persecuted protectors? Did they wish to throw suspicion upon the Oratory, and thus to destroy it by alienating people's sympathy? In either event, they were gravely mistaken: never was Don Bosco more devoted to his Archbishop and to Pius IX than after the sufferings he had endured for their sakes, and never did men of goodwill give more striking evidence of their admiration for his extraordinary virtues as an apostle.

Their admiration was not confined to words, it often took the form of financial assistance. And how much he needed it! The whole of his life may be said to have been a long hunt for money. His anxiety as to ways and means poisoned his very existence, and was an endless nightmare to him: it clung to him even till he was on his deathbed. Shortly before dying, he asked Don Rua to excuse him for leaving nothing but debts as his heritage, especially in Rome. Literally millions had fallen into his hands, but next to none remained in them; they rapidly went to satisfy the most insistent of his creditors. " Don Bosco's needs," said Mgr. Bertagna, " were always greater than the alms he received; as soon as he had a copper, he pledged himself for two."

To build his Oratory at Turin, to open other Houses, first throughout Italy, and then all over the world, to erect three large churches, to

forward all his press campaigns, to pay for his constant journeys, to send out and equip his bands of missionaries, to clothe and feed his boys, small and great, to shoulder all the expenses of their education, to assist neighbours in distress, and any other calls, he needed enormous sums. Where could they be found? In the pockets of the benefactors whom heaven sent him. But how hard it was to get at this money! Then he made use of all sorts of means to induce wealth to fulfil its social functions. Don Bosco used to write: today, to the Minister of War for old cloaks or blankets for the use of his boys; tomorrow, to the railway managers to get reductions in the fares for his religious or for holiday excursions; another day, to a benefactor who owned a brick-yard, to obtain some thousands of bricks for a prospective building. To the King and princes he addressed appeals to move their hearts and loosen their purse strings on behalf of his boys; and he reminded Ministers that his House provided shelter for many of their protégés, that a subsidy would be a great help to their finances. Sometimes he would sound a generous friend to see whether he would agree to make a loan, and sometimes he would commend his wants to the great charitable associations. At the most critical moments he would send round circulars to his most eminent benefactors, to his readers, and to those devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

How many were the steps he took for the same purpose! He would preach triduums, novenas, special sermons, give conferences, and render any sort of service, and not even decline, despite his dislike of them, invitations to dinner, if he was sure to get his host or others who were invited to help him in his enterprises. The Marchese Fassati once promised him three thousand francs in instalments of one hundred francs each to be paid at thirty dinners, and Don Bosco agreed. At the fifteenth dinner the Marchese took pity on his guest and let him off the rest. The Duchess de Montmorency-Laval was more ruthless: if Don Bosco wanted a generous donation, he had to go to her château at Borgo, over twelve miles off. At table, he would find the great lady's offering under his serviette.

One of the means which he made most use of for getting the money he wanted was the lottery. It was then in fashion — and he employed it. But the trouble these ten or twelve lotteries gave him is inconceivable. How many letters, calls, long waits, besides getting au-

thorities, distributing tickets, forming committees, advertising, assembling and allotting prizes, explaining delays, etc., had to be gone through! Sometimes his head could hardly stand it, and he asked himself whether the game was worth the candle.

Lastly, when he was quite at the end of his resources and face to face with an insurmountable debt, he took his hat and a ticket for France. This is what he did at the end of the winter of 1884. Bad news had just come from Rome: the building of the Church of the Sacred Heart had come to a standstill for want of funds, and the contractor had sent in an overwhelming bill. The saint did not hesitate for a moment: he set off for the south of France. Yet he was just getting over an attack of bronchitis. To all the entreaties of his most devoted Sons, Don Rua and Don Cagliero, of Cardinal Alimonda, Archbishop of Turin, and of his doctor, he replied: " But don't you see that we cannot go ahead? Only France, at this moment, can come to our assistance." And off he went. Once more God rewarded his courage, for France was generous.

But, in playing the part of beggar, he was scattering the remains of his health on the road. It was being used up in a task that was not altogether his. How large a portion of his fine life was being consumed by anxieties for money! Yet it might have been better spent on higher aims, on fresh foundations.

Such a regret as this never entered his own mind. As the father of such hosts of children, he found it quite natural that such a heavy burden should be placed upon his shoulders. It was when the worry about food was sharpest, when his penury grew to be almost tragic, that he seemed to be gayer than usual. When the boys heard him livelier than ever, when his jokes and humorous sallies poured out most freely, then they said: " Certainly today Don Bosco must be hard up, otherwise he would not be so gay." And they were rarely mistaken. This mirth of his had nothing forced about it, it was no effort to prevent any outward betrayal of disquietude within; it was his conviction that, human means being now exhausted, the divine factor would soon come into play.

And it always did. If the Saint did his best to get out of his worst difficulties, Providence also wonderfully helped him in balancing his budget. Under this head we are at no loss for examples.

The Turin Oratory owed a contractor thirty thousand francs. Dissatisfied at having to wait so long for his money, the man became furiously angry; and one morning he turned up at the Oratory, prepared to make a scene. He went to the procurator and told him he would not leave until he had been paid.

The procurator had to admit that he had not a penny in his cash box.

" You won't get out of it like that," said the contractor in a very loud voice, " I must speak to Don Bosco."

They showed him into an antechamber where several people were waiting for an interview. He sat down in a very bad temper, grumbling audibly. Thereupon enters an imperious looking gentleman, speaking sharply and apparently exceedingly impatient.

" I want to speak to Don Bosco at once."

" Please sit down, Sir, and wait a moment; you shall see him when your turn comes."

" I have no time to wait."

And, without any further formality, off he goes at once to knock at the door of the room where Don Bosco was talking with someone.

Don Bosco opens the door: " What do you want, my friend? "

" Father, I want to speak to you."

" Very well; in your turn, please; I cannot attend to you before all the others who have been waiting here such a long time."

" I am in a hurry, and what I have to say to you will not take long."

In view of his urgency, Don Bosco asks if they will allow this man to pass in, and he, without waiting for a relpy, goes straight into the office.

His rough and harsh tone were not very reassuring, but Don Bosco says: " Pray, sit down."

" I won't sit down."

" But tell me what brings you here."

" Nothing much; I've only a minute to spare. Here, will you take this? " And he puts a small parcel down on the table.

" Well, Father, good-bye, and pray for me." And out he goes.

Enter the Countess V —. " Father, I hope nothing has happened to you. That man really alarmed me: he looks queer, and I feared he might do you harm."

" No great harm," said Don Bosco smiling. " Here is what he has just given me." And, undoing the little parcel, he counts up thirty notes of a thousand francs each.

When the contractor's turn came, Don Bosco handed him the thirty thousand francs due to him. The man was rather ashamed of the urgency he had shown, and made every possible excuse. " Father," said he, " they told me you could not pay me; they were wrong in telling me that."

Once the Oratory owed three hundred and twenty-five francs for taxes. The extreme limit for payment had been reached, and if the money was not paid that day the collector was to serve a writ of execution.

Don Rua hunted everywhere, but could not find a penny in the House. He went to Don Bosco's room, and explained the situation, and then asked if he had the money.

" I have nothing whatever," said Don Bosco. " Let us invoke Our Lady, Help of Christians." Then he calmly went on with his work.

A few minutes afterwards there was a knock at the door, and a gentleman asks to see Don Bosco.

" Father, I am not well off, but I have here a small sum of money that I have got together for your boys. Will you accept my little offering? "

" Very gladly," says Don Bosco.

The gentleman hands him a little bit of paper containing exactly three hundred and twenty-five francs. Don Bosco says with a smile: " Will you kindly hand that to Don Rua on your way out? "

Don Rua reckons up the amount, and says:

" Father is quite right: that is just what we owe."

Then he quickly despatches a messenger to the collector's office. It was after twelve o'clock and the execution had been sent off; but they caught the bearer in time, as he happened to have been delayed, and they got out of debt without incurring any expenses.

One day Don Bosco found himself in a very painful situation: there was a heavy bill at the baker's who was threatening to suspend supplies.

Just then entered Count R. d'Agliano. " Father," said he, " my wife is seriously ill; get them to pray for her." And he gave him just half the amount he owed the baker.

Immediately the boys said special prayers with the greatest fervour. On the third day afterwards the Count returned. " Father," said he, " my wife is cured." And he handed Don Bosco the same amount as he had done at first, so that the baker's bill was settled in full. And you can imagine how they thanked Our Lady, Help of Christians.

In March, 1880, Don Bosco was spending a week at Nice. On this occasion Mr. Ernest Harmel was entertaining all the boys of the St. Peter's Oratory at a feast, to which many members of the Salesian family had been invited.

A few moments before the meal, Mr. Michel, well-known for his zeal in all charitable good works, was talking to Don Bosco, who remarked to him: " Our Chapel is too small and unsuitable; we must really find a better home for Our Lord. Here is a plan which our excellent architect, Mr. Levrot, has sent us; the estimate comes to thirty thousand francs."

" Thirty thousand francs, Father? I doubt if you can raise them in Nice at the present time. This winter we have had so many charity sermons, lotteries and collections of all kinds that our purses are empty."

" Nevertheless, we want that amount this very day."

Thereupon, it strikes twelve, and they sit down to their meal. When the dessert came, up rises Mr. Sajetto, the solicitor of the Oratory.

" Father," says he, " I beg to state that a charitable person has just sent me thirty thousand francs for you. You can have them at my office whenever you like."

" Praise be Our Lady, Help of Christians," says Don Bosco, clasping his hands together; and raising his eyes heavenwards: " This is the beginning."

As for the lawyer, he was quite struck on seeing the exact sum Don Bosco had asked for come in.

In 1869 Don Rua, then procurator of the Oratory, received the customary notice of a bill due to be paid next day. The amount was not a large one; but still it had to be found. Nothing was done in the House without Don Bosco being informed of it, however small it might be; but when a bill came in the procurator went to tell him of it with remarkable readiness.

That day Don Bosco was very busy, and he merely answered Don Rua: " Do your best about it." Then he went on with other things

Don Rua was pretty well used to that kind of advice, and went the round of the Oratory. He went to the bookshop, the printing-works, the sacristy, and conscientiously emptied out all the cash boxes. As for his own, it was quite dry; that was its usual state when payments were due.

When he had gone through every reckoning twice over, he had not quite enough to meet the unlucky bill. So he again had recourse to Don Bosco.

" We are just over thirty francs short."

" Do your best."

" But, Don Bosco, you are off tomorrow morning; will you leave me in such a fix? After midday, we shall be served with a protest."

" Don Bosco can have nothing to do with it. I must go. Do your best."

The morning of the next dreadful day looked very dark; the wretched thirty francs gave no sign of turning up. Don Rua was preparing to show Don Bosco the disadvantages of getting a protest, when the Cavaliere Occelletti came in.

" Good day, Don Bosco, I want to see you."

" Quite impossible. I have to catch the train."

" But it is about some money."

" It is Don Rua's business to take it. Give it to him quickly, and come with me. We can talk together on the way."

Cavaliere Occelletti was a great benefactor of the Oratory; he brought an offering every Saturday. Once in the street, he told Don Bosco that that very morning he had thought of coming to pay for a few lottery tickets. He had at first rejected the idea, because his day for calling was Saturday, not Wednesday; but afterwards he had felt that he must come to liquidate his little debt.

" And what is the amount of your troublesome debt? "

" Oh, not much: just over thirty francs."

Don Bosco smiled. " And that was all you wanted me to miss my train for? " And then, shaking hands: " Don Rua will tell you what a happy thought you had; but for you, we should have had a protest handed in at midday."

Such money miracles poured in uninterruptedly during the life of the Saint. He never has a penny, and yet feeds thousands of boys. Some-

times everything seems on the point of a crash; huge bills come in, and there is no cash in hand. People crowd in upon him; he turns, in the middle of writing a letter, to ejaculate: " All right; " and as they persist in saying: " But something must be done; " " It is God's business," he calmly replies, and finishes his letter. And always, whether it be thirty, forty, fifty, or a hundred thousand francs, someone brings the amount required in time, and Don Bosco smiles with no sign of surprise.

Thus it was from January 19, 1851, from the day when he bought Pinardi House, till January 31, 1888, the day he died of paralysis.

More Trials

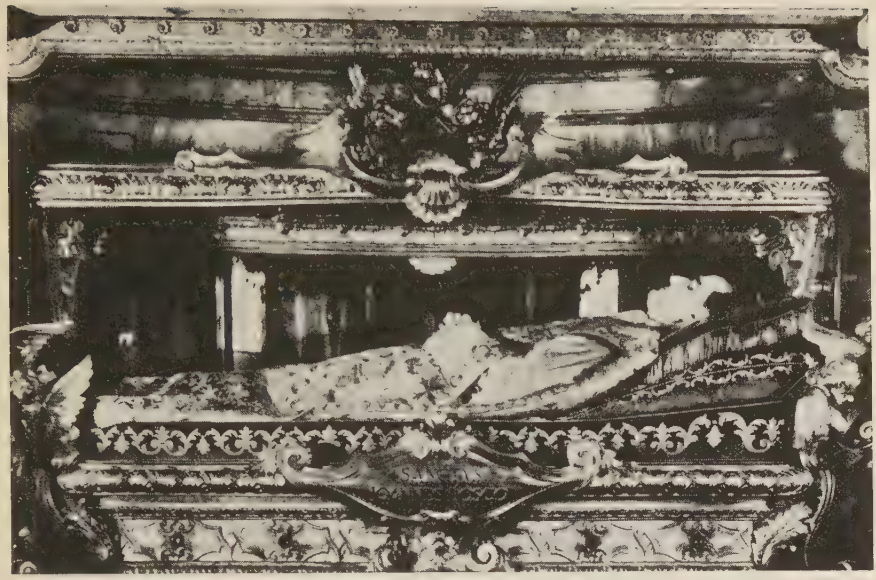
" Money crashes don't kill," says the proverb. Though Don Bosco was inevitably harassed by the urgency of his creditors or the growing needs of his undertakings, he nevertheless maintained the most serene calm. But one day in 1867 a trial fell upon him which injured him far more deeply than anyone would suspect. This time he bent before the storm, and his heart was wrung with anxiety for months on end. His orthodoxy was questioned, and one of his little treatises ran the risk of condemnation.

Here are the facts. For the eighteenth centenary of the martyrdom of St. Peter, Don Bosco, in the *Catholic Readings of* 1867, had written a pamphlet meant to revive the devotion of the faithful for the Prince of the Apostles. It was entitled: *The Centenary of St. Peter the Apostle*, and, besides a *Life of the first Pope*, it contained an Appendix on his coming to Rome. The work was really a reprint. It had appeared in the same series in 1854, with the *Imprimatur* of the Bishop of Ivrea, Censor of the archdiocese of Turin. Roman libraries had bought it. In 1858 His Holiness' Cardinal Vicar had specially recommended the series of *Catholic Readings* which contained this book, and the Holy Father had himself said of the series, in thanking its author for its dedication to himself: " I find nothing more profitable nor better for rekindling and increasing the piety of Christians." Hence Don Bosco felt quite sure of the doctrine of the treatise; and, at the beginning of 1867, he again reissued it for circulation throughout Italy. It was again successful; the edition was sold out very quickly, and the great Jesuit review, the Civiltá Cattolica, praised it in a considerate notice.

As the issue was selling out rapidly, a rumour came to the ears of the Saint: Roman theologians had singled out, on p. 192 of his booklet, a sentence on St. Peter's stay in Rome which was capable of being wrongly understood. Alluding to the historical discussion then proceeding as to the problem of St. Peter's stay in Rome, Don Bosco wrote: " I think it well, by the way, to give this advice to all who are ready to write or speak on this question: not to regard it as a truth of the faith or of religion." If only he had never written this sentence, what troubles and tears he would have been spared!

As a matter of fact, the little treatise was soon denounced to the Congregation of the Index, which ordered one of its consultors, Canon Delicati, a professor of Church History at the Apollinare, to investigate the charge. A pitiless report, after the whole work had been thoroughly sifted, ended in a conditional condemnation, *proscribendum donec corrigatur*. " To maintain that St. Peter's coming to Rome," said the report, " is no point of doctrine, in the sense that it has nothing to do with any dogma of faith, is an error which can but give a shock to the ears of the faithful. This fact, indeed, is chiefly a matter of history and must be based upon the rules of sound criticism; but further, it has a close connection with a dogmatic truth, whereof it is the foundation, the primacy of the Roman Pontiffs . . . It is a truth of the faith," repeated the report later on, " that the Primacy conferred upon Peter passes by right to his successors, the Roman Pontiffs: therefore the fact of the Prince of the Apostles coming to Rome and dwelling there is not irrelevant to that dogma."

The harsh verdict proposed to the Congregation of the Index was not approved by it. In the meantime, Pius IX intervened. " No, let there be no condemnation," he ordered. " Poor Don Bosco, if his book needs any amendment, let him correct it in a second edition: that will be enough." This decision was communicated by the Archbishop of Turin to Don Bosco, and found him entirely submissive, but crushed with grief. The thought of having tarnished, were it only by a breath, the purity of doctrine, and of having given pain to the Pope, was a very nightmare to him. One day he could no longer endure it: he drew up an address to the Prefect of the Congregation of the Index which made his thought plain. " Never," he wrote, " did it come into the mind of the



Urn containing his body in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.

The room where he died.

writer of the booklet to affirm that the coming of Peter to Rome was irrelevant to the faith; he only meant to say that this historical point was not in the list of the articles defined by the Church. Moreover, many passages in the tract prove that the writer is profoundly convinced that the Pontiff of Rome is the only successor of Peter, possessing like him the primacy of authority over the whole body of Bishops." " I am quite ready," ends Don Bosco, in his humble pleading, " to modify, correct, erase or add anything definitely suggested to me for my little book."

This memorial he had copied out by one of his Sons, the cleric Chiapale, who has given us a striking record of that wakeful night. " Here," said Don Bosco to him, " copy this out in your finest handwriting. The work is urgent: but do it very carefully." The papers were the actual text sent by the Congregation of the Index, the letter accompanying it addressed to the Archbishop of Turin, and the memorial that Don Bosco had worked out in collaboration with his friend Mgr. Gastaldi, nominated to be Bishop of Saluzzo. " In reading the Roman requisition," writes the cleric, " I was struck by the severity of its tone. It seemed to take no account of Don Bosco's situation in the Church of God and in the esteem of his contemporaries. While I was writing, from the adjoining room in which the Servant of God was, came sighs of grief and half-stifled groans. At midnight, the door opened.

" ' Have you finished? ' asked Don Bosco.

" ' Not yet.'

" ' Is there much left? '

" ' Not very much.'

" ' Then go to bed; you can finish tomorrow morning. The important thing is that it must go off before eight o'clock.'

" And as I was reading my work over, he went back to his room, and I followed him. With my copy in his hands, he sank into an armchair, with his face quite upset.

" ' Don't you see how badly things are turning out? ' he asked.

" ' Well, yes, Don Bosco, but have patience; it will all come to nothing.'

" Then he turned to the crucifix which stood above his work, ' Yet you know, O my God, the intention I had in writing this book. Ah! *Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem! . . . Fiat voluntas tua! . .*

I really don't know how I shall get through this night.' And great tears fell from his eyes, and a sharp sob shook his breast.

" I tried to console him with a few poor words, but he said to me: ' Chiapale, go and sleep; come back early.'

" At five o'clock I was with him again. He was quite calm and quiet. Peace seemed to have taken possession of him once more. While I was finishing my copy he went to confess the children and to say Mass as usual. On his return the work was finished. He cast a glance at it and then exclaimed: ' Bravo! You are really an artist.' It was now quite another Don Bosco whom I had before me; he was again serene and almost lively.

" At this moment the sonorous voice of the Bishop of Saluzzo resounded on the landing.

" ' Is Don Bosco there? '

" ' It is Mgr. Gastaldi.' I told the Father.

" ' Come in, come in, Monsignor,' said Don Bosco smiling.

" ' Well, now; is the manuscript ready? '

" ' Yes, Monsignor.'

" ' The Bishop ran through it rapidly.

" ' That is splendid,' said he. ' There's nothing to add to it.'

" ' And do you think, Monsignor, that after this all danger will be over? '

" ' Why, certainly, O man of little faith,' replied the Bishop. ' Fear no more. I have read and re-read your booklet. Inaccuracies, yes; but errors, not a shadow of one. A few corrections here and there; and the whole business is dead and buried. Believe my word. "

And thus it was. The Index, on receiving these explanations, was convinced of his orthodoxy and of his spotless intention; they required only one correction and one erasure, and the incident was over.

But we may declare, without exaggeration, that during these few weeks of May, 1867, Don Bosco passed through the most painful days of his life.

Compared with this trial, the illnesses that affected his poor body were of small account; but nevertheless they were not wanting. Fairly early, when he was hardly forty, his sight began to fail. A stroke of lightening which, in July, 1856, threw him to the ground, in a storm during a retreat, at Sant' Ignazio, had badly injured his right eye. The

nights he sat up to write his works or to correct his proofs ended by ruining it. In 1878 it was utterly gone, and the other one was gravely affected. The doctors had to intervene and to forbid Don Bosco to do any work with his pen or any reading after sunset.

From 1846, varicose veins made his legs swell; the evil went on increasing, and from 1853 till the end of his life Don Bosco had to bear this daily cross, as he called it, which made walking extremely painful.

How often, too, was he a victim of miliary fever, which revealed the arthritic character of his constitution. It came out, as it always does, in little red pimples which came to a head and left scales behind them. In Varazze, in 1871, he had ten such eruptions in consequence of a chill on the eve of the Immaculate Conception, causing a painful attack of rheumatism in the region of the heart. That time they believed it would be all over with him, but a special benediction of Pius IX set him up again.

We will say nothing of his headaches and toothaches, which were so acute sometimes that he felt, he said, as if he would go wild with pain.

All his life his chest was rather weak, and his excessive work often resulted in more or less serious spitting of blood. In 1884, at the end of January, his heavy work in the confessional sent him to bed with an alarming attack of bronchitis. He was utterly exhausted, and his varicose veins swelled to a terrible extent. People trembled for his life, but he recovered once more, though slowly. It was at that time, towards the end of February, 1884, that he had such an enormous and insistent bill to meet for work done on the church of the Sacred Heart, that, though he was barely convalescent, he had to set out for France, and his best friends tried hard to dissuade him from such madness; he went off, trusting to the grace of God, who brought him back to his humble quarters without too great harm.

From that time he was constantly beset with myelitis which eventually carried him off. His last three years were a continual and increasing martyrdom. He became a shadow of his former self, and had to be supported in order to walk. He reached the end of his life utterly worn out. The great worker had gone beyond what man's strength could endure, and had to to pay dearly for his excess of zeal.

This devotion to the cause of the young, the lowly, the destitute was ill-rewarded by the educational authority. It is apt to ignore every-

thing but the regulations, and to apply them with a ruthlessness that admits of no exeception from the letter of the law. To help the many families in a district that had no secondary school, Don Bosco had opened in that quarter a few classes assiduously attended by the sons of the poor. He did so in good faith; among the teachers were some without degrees, others with them. He was thinking of one thing only: the teaching of these poor lads. But can that be done without a formal decree? The educational authority said: No, and in October, 1878, it refused to have the school reopened.

It went even further. To give his other secondary schools — at Mirabello, Lanzo, Varazze, Valsalice — professors with degrees, Don Bosco had deprived himself of them. He managed as well as he could, persuaded that those who were in high places would still be tolerant. The Oratory gave shelter to many orphans and to no small number of the destitute. Such services as it rendered in this were considerable; and they might well have been acknowledged by overlooking this irregularity, and all the more so because the quality of the teaching clearly proved the excellence of the teachers. Out of eighty-two candidates for the preliminary examination for the bachelor's degree in 1879, in the part of Turin including Valdocco, thirty-one were Don Bosco's, and twenty-eight passed with flying colours. Such successes should have convinced those with open minds and made them defer any vexatious measures. But nothing of the kind happened. On June 23 of that year, just when they were going to give their best wishes for his feast day to Don Bosco, came the order to close the secondary school.

This harsh measure hit him in the tenderest spot. The suppression of his humanity classes meant the destruction of half of the work of the Oratory, and of the spring of Salesian vocations. The great educator's anxiety was deep. Yet no one, during his festival day, in which he appeared to be more smiling and gay and paternal than ever, remarked the dreadful blow that had just fallen upon him. But as soon as the illuminations were extinguished Don Bosco started on the work of salvage. His first atempt, on applying to the authorities at Turin, yielded no result. Then he sent to Rome one of his Sons and one of his friends, one a professor at the Oratory, the other at the University, Father Durando and Signor Allievo, to get a liberal respite from the Ministry. This attempt was as unsuccessful as the first; they were evidently meet-

ing with set opposition. The only course left was to appeal to the King's clemency.

Don Bosco made his appeal to it in moving words: " Sire," he wrote to the young King Humbert, " as an Institute so often succoured and, so to speak, founded by your family, and quite recently generously helped by your Majesty in person, the *Oratory of St. Francis de Sales*, whose object it is to receive the children of the people who are in danger of becoming lost, is now in peril of death. A ministerial decree, issued on the twenty-third of this month, orders the closing of the classes which have been carried on for the last thirty-five years. Now I find myself driven to turn into the street three hundred lads who are finishing schooling and would soon have been ready to render useful service to their country. May your Majesty condescend to come to our assistance and to save these deserving but destitute youths from a disaster." The King granted the appeal, and the decree was suspended. The question was submitted to the Higher Council of Public Instruction, and three years later, in 1881, met with the expected solution: Don Bosco had had time enough to set things straight. In the meantime his Oratory and the spirit which animated it, far from weakening under the storm, had gained an impetus which well justified its Founder's saying: " My House took its rise from a thrashing given to a poor little ragamuffin, and it has gone ahead only from further thrashings."

To these trials and to a host of others Don Bosco could hardly perhaps give a name, but in 1847, quite at the beginning of his apostolate, a revelatory dream had warned him of their violence and of their continuity. That night he had seen the Blessed Virgin inviting him to walk through a long pergola of roses. The roses not only hung in festoons from the posts and in bouquets from the archways, but sprang from the ground in profusion, exhaling an exquisite scent. To crush them as little as possible, Don Bosco took off his boots, but at the outset he found that these beautiful flowers concealed long thorns. He therefore turned back and put on his boots, and then started afresh, followed now by a number of companions. The beauty of the blooms and their intoxicating perfume delighted the band and drew them on; but soon the company found their faces and hands were covered with blood. Onlookers who lined both sides of the arbour murmured: " Oh, Don Bosco is walking on a carpet of roses. Lucky man! " The priests and

young clerics in Don Bosco's train had started on the way with joyful enthusiasm, but gave in after the first few steps. " We have been taken in," they groaned; and then turned back. At their treachery Don Bosco began to weep. " Can it be," he asked, " that I shall have to reach the end alone? "

At this moment there came towards him a troop of priests and clerics and laymen who said to him in decisive tones: " Take us. We are ready to follow you anywhere." He then placed himself at their head, and almost all his new companions reached the other end of the tunnel along with him. But in what a state! They were tired out, wasted and covered with blood. Thereupon a light breeze healed their wounds and restored their energies. It continued to blow until, as by enchantment, the Saint found himself amidst a host of boys whom the priests and clerics and laymen were entertaining and guiding and teaching.

The symbol was perfectly plain: Don Bosco was to pay in suffering for the joy of devoting himself to the young and of feeling himself helped by the self-sacrifice of others.

Thirty years later, almost at the end of his career, this dream was to be repeated under a form no less pleasing, but far more definite. On the night of July 8-9, 1880, Don Bosco saw himself, in the room next to his own, surrounded by the Superior Chapter of the Salesian Congregation. The sitting had only just begun when the sky was suddenly overcast, and a tremendous storm of thunder and lightning burst forth. Then a terrible thunder-stroke made the air tremble. Don Bonetti rushed to the window of the gallery close by to see where it had fallen. Then he exclaimed: " Oh! A downpour of thorns! " In fact, thorns were falling as thickly as raindrops in a thundershower. There was a second thunderstroke, and the weather cleared up a little. Then Don Bonetti, as he looked out, cried: " Now the thorns are given way to flower-buds." And indeed the ground was becoming green with a carpet of flower-buds. There was a third thunderstroke, and Don Bonetti, with a clear sky before him, observed: " All right! now it is raining flowers." And the flowers kept on falling in a thick rain, strewing the roofs of the house and the ground itself with their variegated decoration. Finally, a last thunderclap, stronger than all the rest, shook the house: " This time it is raining full-blown roses," cried the Father. The sky had

suddenly grown quite clear and shining, and a rain of strongly perfumed and many coloured roses was pouring down upon the Oratory. " It is none too soon," sighed Don Bosco.

This dream was heaven's answer to the Saint. For eight years he had been begging God to put an end, not to his sufferings, but to a trial that was hindering the progress of his Congregation, throwing people of goodwill into confusion and scandalising Christ's little ones. It began the day after the nomination of Mgr. Gastaldi, Bishop of Saluzzo, to the Archbishopric of Turin. The nomination was Don Bosco's own doing. The new Archbishop, who succeeded Mgr. Riccardi di Netro, was on the list of candidates drawn up by Don Bosco in 1871 for the vacant sees of Italy. Pius IX did not share — and for good reasons — in his sympathy for the Bishop of Saluzzo. " You want him," he said to him; " very well, take him." But he knew the Bishop, and from the outset felt that more than one tragic consequence might ensue.

Mgr. Gastaldi had always been one of Don Bosco's great friends, and this thirty-year-old friendship had led to considerable services of a practical character. A learned priest, a theologian of value, an eminent professor, with a twofold doctor's degree in Sacred Studies, Canon Gastaldi had formerly held the Chair of Rhetoric at the Oratory for Don Bosco's clerics. In 1867, when the Index was threatening to condemn a little treatise by Don Bosco, Mgr. Gastaldi, then nominated as Bishop of Saluzzo, collaborated in compiling a justificatory memorial on behalf of the Saint. Later on, it was he who sent the most ardent commendatory letter to Rome to get the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars to give their final approval to the Salesian Congregation. When Don Bosco started the church of Mary, Help of Christians, he came to his assistance more than once in moments of difficulty. As the Saint acknowledged, he had been one of his best advisers for over thirty years. And Don Bosco's gratitude had led him to have Mgr. Gastaldi nominated first to the bishopric of Saluzzo, and then to the archbishopric of Turin. There was only one dark spot on their friendship: the philosophical theories of the prelate. Between his tenure of the canonry of Turin and his nomination to the bishopric of Saluzzo, Mgr. Gastaldi had enrolled himself among the first followers of Rosmini. He had gone through his noviciate in England, returned to Italy as a professor in an educational foundation of the Order, and finally left the young Congregation for the most

praiseworthy reasons; but he had adopted almost all the ontological theories of the great Italian philosopher, and but rarely sought help from St. Thomas in trying to find solutions for any modern problems.

Mgr. Gastaldi's gifts of heart and temperament were not up to the high level of those of his mind. He was somewhat impulsive and vehement, and even hot-tempered. He became quickly and entirely engrossed in his ideas, and then could hardly tolerate anyone to think otherwise than he did. Extremely jealous of his own authority, he easily fancied that others were trying to encroach upon it or to criticise it. He wanted to centralise everything, allowed no orders to be given except those authorised by himself, and interfered too readily in other people's affairs without being invited to do so. More than one of his actions, more than one of his vexatious decisions, might be explained by one of three things: there was something abnormal in his make-up, as one who knew him well writes; he suffered much with his liver; and he was surrounded with bad advisers.

The three counsellors, to whom he confided his fine but ingenuous soul, and whose advice he was too prone to take, the three tittle-tattlers, were three canons of the Cathedral Chapter, of whom the less said the better. Two of them were pulled up later on by supreme authority for sad reasons, and the third revealed an extraordinary baseness of character; we shall meet with him again at the close of the present chapter.

On the arrival of Mgr. Gastaldi at the See of St. Maximus, Don Bosco had thoroughly rejoiced. But his joy was of but short duration. Six months afterwards, by an unexpected change of front, the Archbishop already showed a latent antipathy to the Founder and his Oratory. By slow degrees those about him, in that archiepiscopal Curia which had never looked upon the enterprises of the apostle sympathetically nor tolerated the lesson set by his example, had poured into the prelate's mind the subtle poison of insinuation and calumny. " Oh, that Don Bosco, he is always to the fore! When will he begin to be like other people, instead of setting up Seminary against Seminary? — Look at him now, meddling with *Late Vocations*: why? He should be more careful in educating the riffraff he has already collected. His clerics are a disgrace. They make themselves cheap, playing with mere boys, and expose themselves in their rough-and-tumble games to the danger of revealing what poor rags their cassocks cover. Then again, one privilege

after another — with private and peculiar means of communicating with the Vatican. Never deigning so much as to come and ask us for advice. It would be interesting to know the kind of ecclesiastical studies they do at Valdocco: not very thorough, say the gossips. It seems that Don Bosco has some sort of a Noviciate there. Queer kind of Noviciate indeed, with the time of the Novices so taken up that they can scarcely manage to read their Rule. And the Rule: everything that is worthless and disappointing: just imagine religious who take the vow of poverty and yet retain possession of their property! " And so the campaign of insinuation grew bitter.

A pretty good head was needed to withstand such clever strategy, which unmasked its batteries from day to day, to discover all the weak spots. And then, what could be done against these three? At last the Archbishop came to see with the eyes of the three canons.

Thereupon arose a struggle which was to last ten years. It would take too long to relate all the episodes. A few will suffice to give some notion of the steep Calvary Don Bosco had to climb. Making his deposition on the subject of this most striking of all the evidences of his sanctity, Cardinal Cagliero thus concluded his testimony given before the pontifical commission that had to draw up the case with regard to Don Bosco's heroic virtues: " This cross," said the Cardinal, " which the Lord laid upon his shoulders never drew a groan from his lips, nor an exclamation of impatience, nor any attempt at retaliation. And yet God knows how much time he took merely in self-defence! He bore the burden with courage, serenity and humility, without losing his interior peace for a moment, without interrupting his work for a minute. Such cheerfulness of mind and such immovable union with God amidst the worst trials is the true mark of the Saint." He could not have put it more aptly.

And facts corroborate this all-round sentence.

A few months after taking possession of his see, the Archbishop had Don Bosco informed of the conditions upon which he would ordain his subjects. Several of them were quite legitimate; others merely testified his desire of interfering with the interior and disciplinary regime of the Congregation which had been approved by Rome from the beginning of 1869. Why, then, had a candidate for Holy Orders to bring the consecrating Bishop, forty days before his ordination, the reasons which

had made him decide upon that particular Order or upon leaving his old diocese?

A Turin seminarist, named Rocca, wanted to join the Salesian Congregation. Several times he asked for the Archbishop's permission to follow his vocation. The answer was invariably in the negative. Later a sickness took him home and left him free to join the Society. Even then it was impossible to obtain from Mgr. Gastaldi the dimissorial letters required for admission to the noviciate. They were asked for seven times at the archiepiscopal office. This was in vain, and they had to beg the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars to order the Archbishop to furnish the necessary document.

This vexatious incident showed Mgr. Gastaldi's firm determination never to yield one of his subjects to Don Bosco. He had even exacted from the Founder a written promise never to receive among his Sons a Turin seminarist. For the sake of peace Don Bosco drew up a deed, specifying that the undertaking was meant to be confined within the limits prescribed by Canon Law for the protection of the freedom of religious vocation. This strictly orthodox observation displeased the Archbishop, who refused acceptance of the deed.[1]

Every year, at his College at Lanzo, a bracing mountain solitude, about eighteen miles from Turin, Don Bosco used to invite the teaching staff of primary and secondary schools to a spiritual retreat. He was thinking solely of their spiritual good, and nowise of trying to get any hold upon them. These beneficial retreats were authoritatively suppressed.

In 1874 the Saint started his penultimate enterprise, his *Association for Late Vocations*. The proposal was warmly welcomed by Pius IX, who gave it his special benediction. Don Bosco then had the idea of

1 It might be inferred that Don Bosco's zeal in recruiting vocations for his Society would naturally lessen the numbers at the Diocesan Seminaries. Far from it. It was due to that same wonderful zeal and foresight that the Seminaries of Piedmont, which had been closed down by the Revolution, were provided with students when they could be opened again. In the Major Seminary of Turin in 1865, 38 out of 46 clerics had finished their classics at Valdocco, and in 1873, 120 out of 150. Fr. Cagliero, in 1870, visiting the Seminary of Casale, noted that out of 40 clerics attending 38 were from the Salesian Schools. The same can be said of the other subalpine dioceses. At the death of Don Bosco about 2,000 priests had come out' of his institutions. Fifteen Archbishops and Bishops received instrution at the Oratory at Valdocco.

disseminating a little tract explaining the objects of the Association recommending it to the zeal of the parochial clergy; but he could never get the diocesan *Imprimatur* for it. Worse than that: the Bishops of the ecclesiastical provinces of Turin, Vercelli and Genoa were advised to protest to the Pope against the project, which as it appeared, was likely to ruin the smaller seminaries and injure vital diocesan interests. Don Bosco had to ask his good friend, the Bishop of Fossano, for an *Imprimatur*, and, on the advice of Rome, not to open his first House for Late Vocations at Turin, but near Genoa.

For a great many years, Don Bosco's Oratory had enjoyed, in virtue of a pontifical grant, which had been made to many other religious communities, the privilege of celebrating three solemn Masses on Christmas night. On December 19, 1872, the Archbishop made known to Don Bosco that the church of Our Lady, Help of Christians, must conform with ancient Christian custom, by celebrating only one Mass at night.

At least thirty times Don Bosco invited his Archbishop to pontificate at one of the great Salesian solemnities, but always met with a refusal. He begged him at any rate to give his boys Confirmation, for the pupils of the House had not had an oppurtunity of receiving that Sacrament for nearly four years. He received the same answer. And more than one Bishop, a friend of the Saint who had proposed to pontificate in his church, was prevented from doing so by diocesan authority; they would have had a bone to pick with the Archbishop, had they done so.

On several occasions — six times, says Don Bosco in his justificatory note — the Archbishop addressed to the Roman Cardinals, the Consultors of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and eminent ecclesiastical personages, memorials and even treatises, in which, on the ground of presumed facts, gathered from all sorts of people, the Salesians were described as ignorant religious, self-satisfied and insubordinate, more turbulent than zealous.

And now we come to the two gravest incidents that fostered the vexatious dispute during the last five years. In 1878 and 1879 appeared at the Bruno Press of Turin four pamphlets: *A New Year Message for the Clergy; A Sample of Mgr. Gastaldi's Doctrines; The Rosminian Question; The Archbishop of Turin, Don Bosco and Don Oddenino.* These tracts were anonymous; but the covers of the first and third indicated that they had been written by a convent chaplain and by a

Salesian Co-operator. All the four attacked the Archbishop: the first for his unjust treatment of Don Bosco; the second and third for his Rosminian errors; the fourth for the partiality with which he had settled a dispute which had arisen at Chieri between the senior rector and the Director of the Salesian Oratory. Immediately Don Bosco and his Sons fell under suspicion. Now they were entirely innocent. Later on, much later on, seventeen years afterwards, in 1895, one of the culprits revealed the names of three of the writers of the tracts: the first was by Father Turchi, an old pupil, formerly a professor at the Valdocco Oratory; the second by Father Ballerini, S.J.; the third by Canon Anfossi, a former Salesian religious, who had gone over from the religious to the secular clergy. The writer of the fourth was never known.

Obsessed with his grievance, the Archbishop insisted on Don Bosco making a declaration affirming that he formally condemned the contents of the tracts. Could he make it? The philosophic theories set forth in two of them were unfortunately nearly akin to error, and the fact stated in the two others were genuinely true. Hence the doctrine in the first two and the statements in the last two could not be repudiated. In a very dignified letter Don Bosco confined himself to stating that neither he nor any of his Sons had had any part in the composition or editing of the libels, and that he strongly disapproved of their disrespectful tone towards the sacred person of the Archbishop. He could go no further. None the less he was still regarded, if not as the author, at least as the inspirer of the pamphlets, simply because he had once happened to listen to the complaints of Father Pellicani, S.J., as to the Archbishop's mode of government, and had advised him to tell the Pope all about it.

A few months afterwards, at the end of 1878, a second incident happened to aggravate the first: this was the Bonetti affair. It was to last more than four years and to make the Saint suffer terribly, as well as one of his best Sons, Father Bonetti, a model religious, an indefatigable apostle and a born writer. The facts are as follows. In June of that year Don Bosco opened an Oratory for young girls with a public chapel at Chieri, then numbering about fifteen thousand inhabitants. Very soon grave difficulties arose between the Oratory and the parish. Such difficulties are common in parochial experience: on the one hand, the parish has legitimate claims upon its children, for it is finally re-

sponsible for them, and their careers have to be spent in it; but, on the other hand, the teaching and education of the young is a strictly technical affair which parish priests, even if they were all specially qualified for it, cannot carry out in addition to their many other labours. Hence an *entente* must be sought for; and usually, when there is mutual goodwill and a love of peace on both sides, it is easily found. At Chieri they never even tried to find it. The senior rector, Don Oddenino, took up his stand against the flourishing Oratory — it numbered nearly five hundred girls — and notified it that by its timetable, its noisiness and its conduct within and apart from the parish, it was an unfair rival. The Director went on with his work without paying much attention to the rector's grievances; and the latter persisted in protesting and in regarding the Oratory as a hostile outpost.

His protests reached the Archbishop, who intervened vigorously. As Mgr. Gastaldi wrote himself: To obviate all scandal, the head of the diocese decided that the only remedy was to be found in changing the Director. To compel Don Bosco to do this, he deprived Don Bonetti of his faculties for hearing confessions at Chieri in the first place, and then throughout the diocese. This suspension was imposed by order without the three previous notices required by Canon Law. A highly honoured priest was thus publicly affronted on a point of sacerdotal honour without having any real opportunity of defending himself.

It was Don Bosco who undertook his defence. The affair was carried to Rome. It reached a satisfactory solution three years afterwards: Cardinal Nina, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, in a letter, dated December 22, 1881, condemned, in the name of that Tribunal, the Archbishop's excess of strictness. In 1883, after Mgr. Gastaldi's death, Don Bonetti recovered the full exercise of his sacerdotal freedom. We cannot enter into all the details of this interminable suit, of which Don Bosco wrote: " Most of the vexations which troubled us between 1879 and 1881 were connected with this business."

All these facts taken together as a whole clearly prove that, as Mgr. Vitelleschi, Don Bosco's Roman friend, wrote there was something systematic in the Archbishop's opposition to him. How often they tried to remove it! On two occasions Don Bosco himself endeavoured, through the mediation of friends, the senior Rector of Lanzo and the Count di Castagneto, to settle the suit amicably; but the attempt was in vain.

The Pope himself, in 1875, had the Archbishop of Vercelli, Mgr. Fissore, an intimate friend of Mgr. Gastaldi, invited to interpose his good offices to put a stop to a disagreement which delighted all the enemies of religion; but the Pope's effort met with no better success. And Don Bosco had to go on bearing his cross.

He bore it without any protest until the day when he heard that a suit had been brought against him in the Rome Court. He then felt that not to speak would be to compromise the highest interests of his two Congregations. Thereupon he drew up, by the pens of Fathers Bonetti and Berto, an *Explanation for the Eminent Cardinals of the Congregation of the Council*, who were charged with the preparation of the process. This Explanation — which was regarded by his adversaries as a fifth libel — coldly set forth, year by year, the trials which, from 1872 to 1881, Don Bosco had had to endure in his relations with the diocesan administration. It ended with a humble supplication that the supreme authority would come to his assistance to hinder the recurrence of such incidents as, he said, would divert from the service of souls valuable time, energies and also financial help.

On reading this long memorial, Leo XIII, who had hitherto heard nothing beyond a ring of the bell, was struck. The strength of the case and its sincerity stirred him to the heart. He took part in the debate in person, and had the cause brought before him. Basing his action on the humility of the Saint, he dictated a proposal for an agreement, consisting of seven articles, which was to put a full stop to the dispute. Cardinal Nina, Prefect of the Congregation of the Council, to whom he referred the text, started on reading the first article. " On receiving these instructions Don Bosco shall write a letter to Mgr. Gastaldi expressing his regret that during these last few years vexatious incidents should have impaired their relationship and given sorrow to the heart of the Archbishop. If Mgr. Gastaldi should have thought that he or any member of his Institute were to blame for that, Don Bosco shall beg his pardon and ask him to forget the past."

" This clause seems to me unjust," ventured the Cardinal.

" I know what I am doing," replied Leo XIII. " Don Bosco, we know: he is a Saint . . ."

Read to the Superior Chapter of the Congregation, the proposed agreement met with the same reception as it had received from Cardinal

Nina. " We cannot accept it," said all the members of the Council, except one. " The first article seems to put us in the wrong."

" And you, Cagliero, what do you think of it? " asked the Saint, turning to the only one who had so far said nothing.

" I think that it is just because the Pope knows Don Bosco, his love of peace and his virtue, that he hopes, in this way, to secure some arrangement. He appears to be putting the burden unjustly upon the shoulders of the innocent; but that is because he wants to make sure of attaining the end he has set before himself."

The Saint thought the same as his Son, a man of great good sense, and he faithfully carried out the instructions contained in the pontifical document.

Did peace, a durable peace, ensure?

Alas! it did not. For a mere nothing, for having, for instance, begged Mgr. Gastaldi's permission to let him bless the church of St. John the Evangelist himself, in order to throw it open for worship, and because the Archbishop had been obliged to retire to the Alps for a rest during the summer months, the Saint fell anew under suspicion of trying to encroach on the archiepiscopal authority.

This fundamental and inveterate antipathy can surprise nobody. We may, indeed, deplore, with Pius XI, that Don Bosco encountered " contradictions from the very persons from whom he had a right to expect help and succour," but no one can doubt the honest intention of the Archbishop. We must not forget that Mgr. Gastaldi, in his see of Turin, was a most excellent Archbishop: zealous, learned, pious, a friend of discipline, and devoted to his pastoral duties. Further, he had wretched health, with serious liver attacks; and his impulsive character, far from finding amongst those around him calming and appeasing influences, met with nothing but malevolent insinuations, if not with calumnies. We believe that he really imagined that Don Bosco was opposing him systematically, that he was trying to erect one citadel against another, that he was doing his best to rob him of his best subjects, that he wanted to set himself above his authority, and that the Salesian idea of the apostolate was wrong. He thought that the Society, puffed up with independence, was constantly trampling Canon Law under foot, and carrying on a secret campaign in his diocese against him, and hosts of other things besides. Probably he was in thoroughly good faith. His case was

not an exceptional one. We have only to recall the celebrated misunderstandings of last century which saddened the Church of God and made her enemies smile: the famous disputes between the Bishop of Mans and Dom Guéranger, the Archbishop of Paris and Mgr. de Ségur, Mgr. Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans, and Louis Veuillot.

The problem, therefore, could never be solved.

Only death could settle it; and it did so on March 25, 1883, a year afterwards, when God called the worthy Archbishop of Turin to Himself.

One day in 1872, during the time of his good frienship with Don Bosco, he had given the latter this advice: " Whenever, in your career, you meet with man's contradiction, do not be alarmed, at any rate do not show it; and allow none of your Sons to display any resentment. But be sure that if you are patient and pray and humble yourself before God and men, that will be the best way of overcoming your obstacles. Thus it is that all the holy Founders of religious Orders have acted."

This advice, we think, he followed faithfully enough.

The Apostle

We are now in 1875, Don Bosco is sixty. His mission seems to be finished. One by one, each called forth by the one before, his undertakings for the protection of the young have bloomed to the full. All his Oratories have overflowed beyond the boundaries of the province, and then of the country. France, England and Spain are on the point of adopting them and of incorporating them in their Christian life. An army of disciples has been slowly formed to ensure the continuity of the work, and the size of the host goes on increasing from year to year. On parallel lines, the same work is in the way of being carried out for the girls and young women. Starting ten years after the Salesians, the Religious of Mary, Help of Christians, will soon catch up, both in numbers and in foundations, with their elder brothers. Yes, it really looks as if the man has finished his work, and might view with humble satisfaction the field in which an abundant harvest is ripening. But far from it; the heart of the Servant of God is still unsatiated and uneasy. His highest dream, his oldest desire of being an apostle is yet unrealised. Beyond the sea, in all directions, sitting in the shadow of death, hosts of big children are still waiting for the faith to lighten their path. The wild peoples and non-christian races must still be sought out and led to the divine light of the Gospel. Then, and then alone, will the work be really done. But who will go? Shall he? And why not? How often in the course of his career had he to be kept from going forth into the far quarters of the world where the Faith of Christ had never been preached!

As a young priest, he had already wanted to join a band of missionaries. His confessor, Don Cafasso, had had to keep him back in Italy, to go on with his real mission, his work there. Later on, at the age of thirty-three, his heart was filled with the same desire. Then — in 1848 — the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith* was among his favourite readings. One of his day-boys, a near neighbour, used to run and read each issue to him as soon as it came in. " Ah! if I had plenty of priests and clerics," murmured Don Bosco as he was listening to the narratives that have given rise to so many vocations to the mission field, " I would take them with me to evangelize Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. Do you know why, boy? "

" Probably, because that is the part of the world most in need of missionaries."

" Yes, that is it. There are the races that are utterly abandoned, and I want to fly to their rescue."

Seven years afterwards, in 1855, one of his first followers came into his rooms, and was surprised to see a new picture hanging on the wall.

" Who is this priest? " he asked.

" An ardent missionary, Gabriel Perboyre, who was martyred in China a few years ago."

Then, as if he were speaking to himself, he added: " Oh, how I wish my Sons, too, could go over yonder to the Far East! If only the Lord would give me a dozen priests after my own heart, we would go off together! "

Lastly, at the very close of his life, his thirst for the foreign apostolate, far from being quenched, always drew from him the same complaint, so eloquent in its brevity: " Ah! if I were not so old and broken down, I would take Don Rua with me, and we would be off together to the foreign Missions! "

A desire that was ever eager, but ever rebuffed. And yet he knew, always by the same means, that at any rate through his Sons he was going to work for the extension of the Kingdom of God in heathen lands. Twice Heaven had clearly revealed its will to him. The first time, it was at the deathbed of one of his first disciples, little Cagliero. That year, 1854, cholera had just smitten Turin with such violence as had never been known before. Deaths occurred by dozens daily. We have already seen how Don Bosco brought his bigger boys to the rescue.

Cagliero was one of the most eager helpers: he had done so much that he caught typhoid in its worst form. The doctors had warned Don Bosco that they could do no more, and that it was time for him now to come in. He came to the bedside of the dying lad, and asked him in a fatherly tone:

" Well, John, would you rather live or go to paradise? "

" Go to paradise."

" Nevertheless, it is hardly time for that yet. The Blessed Virgin wants to cure you. You will come through, you will get your soutane, you will be a priest, and one day, with your breviary under your arm, you will go far, very far, away."

A dark saying, the meaning of which would one day be made clear. By the bed of the sick lad Don Bosco had seen a dove carrying an olive branch in its beak. From time to time it flew past and brushed the youth's lips with it, and at last let it fall on the pillow. In the background was a knot of strange figures, genuine Redskins, who appeared to fasten their eyes upon the sick lad with a look of supplication, whilst two of them, huge warriors, one black as ebony, the other copper-coloured, leaned over the dying lad with anxiety to see if there were the least sign of hope. The symbol was quite plain: the dove signified the fulness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which are poured out upon a Bishop at his consecration; and the savages represented the future sheep of this pastor.

" One of you," he had said in 1855, " will be a Bishop; others will come from the Oratory, but they are not here now."

The first vision was followed sixteen years afterwards, one night in 1871, by a dream that left no room for doubt. This dream bore Don Bosco to a very wild and totally unknown region, an immense waste plain unbroken by the least rising ground. On the edge of the horizon was a forbidding chain of mountains which added to the gloom or grandeur of the scene. Half-naked men, of colossal stature and fierce look, dotted the vast expanse. They were all like one another; long unkempt hair, bronzed skin, an animal's hide flung anyhow across their shoulders, and armed with a lance and a lasso in their hands.

Scattered over the expanse they indulged in various exercises. Some were hunting and flinging their lances at wild beasts; others were

returning to their dwellings with a part of some animal on the end of their pikes dripping with blood; these were fighting with each other with drawn knives; those were contending with soldiers in European garb; and the plain was becoming strewn with corpses.

" Suddenly on the horizon appeared a troop of men whose costumes," says Don Bosco, " I recognised as those of missionaries. They approached the poor wretches with a smile and tried to preach the Gospel to them. I fastened my eyes upon some of them to try to discern their Order and who they were, but in vain. Moreover, the savages scarcely gave me time to do so. They had already rushed upon them, flung them down, killed them and were cutting them to pieces; then they carried them back in triumph, dripping with blood, on the end of their lances, amidst a roar of inconceivable shouting and singing. Whoever, I thought to myself, will succeed in converting such hordes of savages?

" I was pondering thus when from the same quarter of the horizon I saw a second band of missionaries in outline. They were not very numerous, but they looked joyful and a troop of young folks preceded them. They, too, will get massacred, I thought. And these too, I tried to make out, as they were on their way, and I recognised them, at any rate some of them. They were all Salesians, and I could name several of them."

" I then attempted to make some gesture to stop them and get them to turn back, for they were running upon certain death, and in a few moments their corpses would be strewn alongside of the rest. But no: at their approach the band of cannibals is filled with joy; they lay down their arms, their fierceness relaxes, and they receive the new missionaries with the liveliest sympathy.

" Look out now! said I to myself. Let us see how it is all going to turn out. My word, it is ending up all right. The apostles mingled with the savages and began teaching them, and these big fellows from the wilderness listened to them with docility and repeated what they were taught and accepted their paternal reproofs with the greatest amiability."

" A little later, I saw the missionaries begin to say the rosary, then start a hymn, and all the huge fellows joined in making their responses to the prayers and hymns. They sang with such cordiality and their

voices were so strong that — I woke up, and found myself in bed in my poor cell."

" This dream made me clearly understand," adds Don Bosco, " that some day my Sons must go off to distant Missions, but I kept asking myself: Who are the savages to whom, in the first place, they are to carry the torch of the Faith? "

This question he put to himself for nearly five years. At first, he thought that it had to do with Ethiopia and its inhabitants. This hypothesis came from a visit paid to the Oratory by a missionary from those parts; but further information led him to abandon the track in that direction.

Then he thought of China. Just at that time a missionary in search of recruits had come to give a lecture at Turin. Don Bosco got into touch with him, asked him questions, and made him talk; but he soon saw that he had missed his way.

Next he turned towards Australia; but when he had learnt the character, the manners and the type of the savages over yonder, he was convinced that they were not the people in question.

Then he turned towards the East Indies. He read all about the great Indian Empire; he conversed with English priests, who were missionaries in that country, and at one time thought he had got hold of the right end of the stick. In fact, he was often heard, at that time, talking of Catholic missions in India; he got several of his religious to learn English, and he was on the point of accepting from Rome an Apostolic Vicariate in the Land of Castes, when a step taken by the Argentine consul put him on the right track.

In December, 1874, this diplomat came, in the name of the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, to propose to him the evangelisation of the immense waste regions extending to the south of the great Republic: Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, the Isles of Magellan, the Land's End of the New Continent towards the South Pole. These endless steppes were inhabited by tribes so near to the animal that some Darwinians thought that they had discovered among them the transitional types between the animal and human species.

How did Don Bosco, from the beginning of their conversations, come to the sure conclusion that these poor creatures were the very ones he had seen in his dream? This question no one has ever been able to

explain. But there is the fact: scarcely had the offer been made to him when he accepted it, and he spent the whole of 1875 in choosing, equipping and instructing a handful of apostles to prepare the way for the future pioneers of the Gospel.

There were ten of them: four priests and six coadjutors. Not one of them now survives. The head of the expedition, Father Cagliero, the boy in the famous dream, was the last to die, in 1926, at the age of eighty-eight, after thirty years of apostolic labour and ten years of tiring service in the diplomatic department of the Vatican, rewarded with the Roman purple.

Don Bosco accompanied them as far as Genoa, and, after having blessed them, he gave them in writing his last instructions:

"*Think only of souls, disdain honours, dignities and money.*

"*Would you win God's blessings and men's goodwill? Be specially tender to the sick, the children, the aged, the needy.*

"*Show always and everywhere respectful obedience to civil and religious authorities.*"

And finally, to the head of the party he added in an undertone:

"*Do what you can, and leave the rest to Our Lord. Have the utmost confidence in the Blessed Sacrament and in Mary, Help of Christians: and you will see what miracles are.*"

The greatest of these miracles was surely the prodigious growth of this missionary work, which put the Salesian Congregation amongst the fifteen greatest missionary societies.

For this first band of good workmen of the Faith was followed by many others. Year after year, despite all the disappointments met with on arrival, despite the ungratefulness of the soil, of the host of enemies they encountered, despite their slender resources and small numbers, these missionaries went forward continually. Tree after tree, they felled the great forest of darkness and let in the light. Twenty years after their arrival the desert had bloomed; all the immense region including northern, central and southern Patagonia and the Argentine Pampa was marked out and won for the Gospel to its farthest corners.

Then the eyes of the apostles were turned elsewhere, farther, much farther north, towards the republic of Ecuador. Some tribes, the Kivaros, lived there, as far as possible from civilisation and from the Faith. In 1895, Rome gathered all these territories under the crozier of a Salesian

Bishop, and they became the Apostolic Vicariate of Mendez and Gualaquiza.

A year earlier, the Sons of Don Bosco had flung themselves deep into one of the twenty-one Brazilian States, Matto Grosso, because they had heard that some Indian tribes, particularly the Bororos, were scattered over many square miles out there, and were waiting still for the light of the Faith. After twenty years' toil, this land was cleared and dug and tilled and partly sown with the word of God, and in 1914 it was made the Prelature of Registro de Araguaya with a Salesian Bishop over it.

Without leaving Brazil, but going directly north, all along the Rio Negro for more than six hundred miles extends a region of forests and rivers inhabited by Brazilians, emigrants and native tribes, among whom are the well-known Tucanos. Until recently they were wandering like sheep without a shepherd, some without the light of the Gospel and others without the joy of the sacraments. In 1914 Rome included all these peoples in the Apostolic Prelature of the Rio Negro, which it entrusted to the Salesian Congregation.

Some ten years later, it was in Paraguay, in the endless solitudes of the Gran Chaco, enclosed in three great rivers, the Paraguay, the Pilcomayo and the Parapiti, that Pius XI installed the Salesians to save from fetishism the twenty or thirty thousand Indians, called Ciamacocos and Lenguas, scattered through that swampy land.

And finally, in 1927, in the basin of the Amazon, on the immense plain watered near Bolivia by the Madeira and covered with tropical forests, the whole of a territory as big as France, with Porto Velho as its capital, was erected into an apostolic prelature; and the warlike tribe of the Piratintins was visited by Salesian missionaries sent to convert them.

Circumstances, it may be observed, have to some extent specialised the Sons of St. John Bosco in the evangelisation of the American Indians. But, whatever may be thought of confining one's attention to the missions of Asia and Africa and Oceania, those in the far forests and wastes of America are as real and dangerous, and use up the missionaries as rapidly as anywhere else.

The difference between the non-christian who inhabit them and those of the yellow or black continents is that, in Africa as well as in

Asia, they constitute the masses, whereas in America the Indian tribes are merely islands, though sometimes very extensive ones, amidst the rest. The masses, in America, are made up of the descendants of the Spanish conquerors, or of emigrants, who surround the poor natives in their last refuges.

Formerly, before the coming of Christoper Columbus, the Indian was the peaceful possessor of the vast expanses; he was also the great majority. Now he is but an insignificant minority, looked down upon as of an inferior race by the conqueror, who leaves him nothing but the right to live, and to live freely, and to allow himself to be exploited by the trader; and that is about all.

It is not enough. No one troubles about the right of such human beings to that Christian Faith which had its place in the standards of Christopher Columbus. The soil has been conquered, but the great conquest, that of the soul of the race, no one has achieved. What is still worse: of our vaunted European civilisation — whether Latin or Anglo-Saxon — we have offered these poor people, sunk in ignorance for centuries, only such elements as are detestable: rapacity, immorality and the taste for drink.

Happily, throughout the ages, since the great Jesuit Missions, which after the discoveries of Cabot, civilised Paraguay, generous souls have been found who fostered that first desire of every true coloniser: the preaching of the Gospel. And almost everywhere, at the call of Bishops and pastors, apostles have run to the rescue from Europe to bring these outcasts in their destitution and persecution and isolation the holy consolations of the Faith.

Until the beginning of this century, the best activities of the Salesian missionaries appear to have been devoted to the copper-coloured races, to the Indian Redskins; but now in 1911 a body of Belgians settles, at the request of the Government, in the midst of the African bush, on the Congo in the province of Katanga. During the nineteen years that they have been there they have raised a harvest of churches so prosperous that, in 1926, Rome has made their field of labour an Apostolic Prefecture, that of Upper Luapula.

From the sons of Ham the Children of Japhet soon had to be visited. In 1920, Mgr. de Guébriant, Superior General of the Mis-

sionaries of the rue du Bac, begged Propaganda to cut off a large part of its field of action in south China, containing a million and a half inhabitants, to make the Apostolic Vicariate of Shiu-Chow, the first Salesian of which was consecrated at Canton by the good Bishop himself.

In that same year the Treaty of Versailles drove from north India the German missionaries who had been preaching the Gospel there for twenty-five years. Propaganda then offered the Salesian Congregation the Apostolic Prefecture of Assam, in the valley of the Brahmaputra, in the heart of the Khasi tribes. In everyone's opinion, this Mission is one that affords the very highest expectations.

A little below it is an entirely Indian diocese, Krishnagar, and the flourishing archdiocese of Madras, which in 1928 Rome entrusted to the great apostle, as she had entrusted, a few years previously Japan, the two whole districts of Miyasaki and Oita.

Lastly, in Thailand, the greater part of the peninsula of Malacca, that which starts from the Gulf of Siam and stops at the Straits Settlements, has been recently detached from the Apostolic Vicariate of Bangkok, to be placed, with its seventy-five thousand square miles, under the control of the Salesian missionaries. It is the most recent stage of the victorious march of that army of which the first troop — blessed and encouraged by their chief — embarked on the *Savoy*, at Genoa, on November 14, 1875.

Such progress was not achieved at the cost of light sacrifices. "You will conquer by *sweat and blood*," Don Bosco had foretold. And blood was shed not only by the rank and file but also by the leaders. Bishop Louis Lasagna — the first Salesian to penetrate into the forests of Matto Grosso — and with him a priest and four Salesian nuns, perished tragically in a train disaster at Minas Geraes, Brazil, in 1895, as they were on their way to make a new missionary foundation. More recently the first Vicar Apostolic of the Chinese Mission, Mgr. Louis Versiglia, and a young priest, his secretary, were massacred by a band of revolutionaries in a heroic fight to protect Chinese women Catechists from insult. But *sanguis martyrum, semen christianorum* (the blood of the martyrs is the seed of christians) and, we may add, of new apostles. The first band of Salesian missionaries in 1875 numbered but ten; today over two hundred religious men and women leave every year for the Mission Fields.

What a pity, perhaps some readers may think, that the apostle who had sent forth his Sons from Italy to the conquest of the non-christian world scarcely had a glimpse of the first results of their zeal. He died in 1888, only four years after the erection of the first of all these apostolic Vicariates and Prefectures. His Sons, at that time, far from having invaded three continents, were camping out wretchedly at the extreme end of the land of Magellan. If only he could have known and seen everything!

But he knew, and his knowledge was quite to the point; he had seen, and seen the whole story clearly, but in a dream. The first time, on the night of August 3, 1883, an exhausting dream had borne him in all directions through South America, and had put before his eyes, from the top of the Cordilleras, a multitude of races and peoples, and had seated him beneath a tent among the most cannibalistic of Indian tribes. To guide him on this nocturnal journey through the New World he had his dear little friend Louis Colle, the son of Count Colle of Toulon, who had died two years before in the odour of sanctity at the age of seventeen. " Look there, before your eyes," said the boy to him, pointing with his finger at the crowds scattered over the plains and along the river banks, in the heart of the vast forests and near the waves of the boundless ocean, " look! there are thousands upon thousands of unfortunates who have been waiting for centuries for the Faith. Go to them. They are the harvest kept for the Salesians." This was clear, the prophecy was transparent: the last corners of this immense South America, where hid superstition, idolatry, satanism, and heathenism, were to be explored and conquered by his Sons.

But their efforts were not to stop there. They were also to carry the good news into the heart of darkest Africa and into mysterious Asia and into far Australia. On April 9, 1886, at Barcelona, a final dream was to make this known to him. The heavenly Shepherdess who, formerly, when he was only nine, had made his mission clear to him, showed him that night the principal places which were to mark the course of the conquering march of his army of missionaries. At one bound his imagination was transported to the foot of the Cordilleras, at Santiago and Valparaiso; then, from there, deep into the African bush;

and lastly, into the very capital or the Celestial Empire, to Pekin. However stout the faith of the apostle may have been, he could not believe in such wonders. All these spaces to evangelize! Such obstacles to overcome! Such distances to traverse! And with such a feeble army and such slender means! No, indeed, that could only be a dream.

But the mysterious Lady calmed his fears. "Be not afraid," she whispered, "be not afraid. These are not thy Sons only, but the sons of thy sons, and their sons again, who are to work these wonders." Who could doubt but that in the third generation that page of missionary history would be written, when before the end of the second it is already so far advanced?

This panoramic view of the good his Sons were to achieve in foreign Missions was not the only reward that God granted to the holy veteran. In the late evening of his life, He vouchsafed him a moment of unspeakable joy. For more than a fortnight he had been nailed to his armchair by the ruthless malady that six weeks later was to tear him from this world, when one December evening he was told of the return of one of his favourite Sons, Bishop Cagliero, the boy whom he had formerly, in 1854, miraculously restored to health. The missionary Bishop was coming back, after thirteen years' absence, from the end of Patagonia, and he was not returning alone.

Try to imagine the scene. The Bishop and the aged Don Bosco embraced each other affectionately, and their joy at meeting one another had hardly given way to calmness when the door opens. Those present draw aside and reveal the pretty figure of a dark Fuegian maid who runs forward and throws herself at the feet of the paralysed old man to whom she owes everything. Don Bosco had not been able to go to Patagonia, but Patagonia had come to him in the person of this young girl, who had been picked up with other savages in the course of the first expedition to Tierra del Fuego.

"Dear Don Bosco," then says the Bishop, "here is the first fruits that your Sons offer you *ex ultimis finibus terrae*."

And the heart of the old man was stirred to its depths anew.

But when the little girl, in a half-barbarous accent, fell at his feet, and looking straight into his face, said in a low voice the sentence she had been saying over and over again to herself for the last few days:

" O Father, I thank you for sending your missionaries for my salvation and to save my brothers," Don Bosco broke down; tears of gratitude gushed from his eyes, and he could not utter the words that he wished to speak.

Those who saw the scene have told us that they will never forget its simple and affecting impressiveness. A worthy reward for such apostolic zeal! A noble crown for a life devoted entirely to the love of souls!

A typical day [1]

It is striking half past four at the church of Our Lady, Help of Christians: the *Angelus* sounds softly in the grey dawn. Sleep still enfolds the great dim house; only one window high up on the second floor of the right wing, at the end of the balcony running round it, shows any light. Don Bosco is already up. " I will only take five hours' rest at night " was one of his resolutions the day before he was ordained: he is keeping his word. Moreover, it is this short sleep, along with his imperturbable calmness, that has enabled him to do so much work in such a few years. Our modern popular cry of " eight hours a day " is far from new to him; for he has given them for nearly fifty years twice over every day to his Master.

Five o'clock: Don Bosco is at prayer. The official prayer of the Church, the breviary, he has been dispensed from saying for some years. His eyes find it too hard to read. One is gone, the other is in grave jeopardy. So the Pope has bidden him: " Unite what he is now doing, in earnest prayer with the Church in prayer." He kneels motionless, his hands clasped, his eyes closed, lost in God. Prayer in all its forms, adoration, thanksgiving, petition and oblation, pours out from his heart

1 This " typical day " is a *sample* of the sort of day spent by Don Bosco during the last ten years of his life, made up of incidents, words and deeds put on record at various moments of his career. Apart from their linking up there is nothing else that is imaginative in the chapter. Not one of the incidents or deeds has been invented; every detail is strictly historical: it is taken from the records actually set down by witnesses who were there at time and wrote down what they had seen or heard as soon as possible afterwards. All the conversations throughout this biography are taken from similar careful records.

to God. Presently, through many channels, he will have to pour divine life and strength into other souls; and now the reservoir is being filled. For an hour, and perhaps longer, Our Lord, His Mother and he are going to love one another. And at times he loses self-consciousness, seized and mastered by the Lord who unveils mysteries or the future to him, or charges him with His missions, or inspires him with some ineffable vision.

Prayer urges men on to action: it acts as a spur. And now he is at his desk, copying out in his big handwriting some sketch drawn up the night before. It is some memorial he is getting ready for an approaching pontifical audience. It is entitled: *Urgent questions for which the Vicar of Christ alone can find an answer.* Let us look over his shoulder and read the lines that his wretched sight makes him write so badly:

" Sacerdotal vocations are falling off in alarming numbers. Even those who persevere are now in grave danger of making ship-wreck, owing to military service being compulsory. A very effective means of parrying the evil is the *Association for Late Vocations*, recommended and enriched with indulgences by Pius IX. Its end is to get hold of young men or adults, full of good will and with adequate qualifications, to bring them to the priesthood. My experience proves that out of a hundred boys, who begin their studies with the intention of becoming priests, scarcely six or seven persevere. On the other hand, in the case of adults, out of a hundred who make a start, about ninety reach their goal . . ."

And thus the memorial procceds, page after page. Leo XIII will hear it read in about a month's time, and this communication from one of the great servants of the Church will influence his decision.

Half past seven. The boys, their morning lessons now over, are about to go to church for Mass. Don Bosco goes before them to wait for his daily penitents in the sacristy. His confessional is between the two sacristy doors opening into the church, in the place now assigned to the electrical control apparatus. Here it is that he heard confessions from 1868 to 1886. He did it in his own way, as he used to formerly in the church of St. Francis de Sales, or in the Pinardi chapel, or in the field belonging to the Filippis. One prie-dieu was on the right, one on the left, and Don Bosco was in the middle, the penitent's forehead on the confessor's shoulder, and Don Bosco's free hand pressing the

boy's head to himself. That morning, there may have been fifty boys in the sacristy, all deep in their examination of conscience. One by one they file past the confessor and it does not take long. They speak quite freely to their Father; and as he can read the depths of their hearts, one or two sentences are enough to shed light into any dark corners. Thus about twenty penitents kneel at his sides. As the Holy Sacrifice proceeds, he thins out the ranks of his boys by making signs to them here and there and sending them off to Communion: these do not require absolution.

The last boy goes away, and Don Bosco, after a few moments' recollection, vests himself to celebrate Mass. He says it with recollection, but not slowly: half an hour at the most. The whole of the world is gone so far as he is concerned: he is entirely given up to his God whom he brings down upon the altar. The reverence of his genuflection, the tone of his voice as he softly says the prayers, the tense and attentive demeanour of his whole person, sometimes, too, tears in his eyes, reveal to those present the fervour of his piety and faith. " Who, then, is this priest who celebrates Mass so well? " they asked Father Albera at Marseilles. " He must be a Saint."

When he leaves the sacristy, it is about nine o'clock. Now recreation is in full swing. From as far away as the boys can see him there is a rush towards him. It is a case of who can get hold of him first. The speediest arrivals kiss his hands and cling close around him, hanging on to his arms, as they are seen in the chief feature of his statue opposite Our Lady, Help of Christians; others try to get through the rapidly growing bunch of humanity to be seen, to pick up some word of his or a smile, to enjoy the delight of feeling his hand on their forehead or shoulders; and the last comers swarm around the moving mass which suddenly bursts forth into shouts and songs. And while moving forward with short, very short steps, for the press is marvellous, Don Bosco speaks. To one he addresses a friendly word, to another a question, to another he flings a very significant glance, and leans down to whisper a secret piece of advice in the ear of some other youngster.

" Go and play," he bids a small boy who has long been avoiding him, but who today has ventured to kiss his hand; and while saying this, the Saint speaks to others without letting go the fingers of the little one. " Well, then you are still there! " he exclaims, looking at his prisoner;

" won't you go off and play? " And this time he lets him go; but the boy has understood him.

" Are you ill? " he asks a big fellow of the third form.

" No, indeed, Don Bosco."

" I thought you were, you look so green."

" But I feel very well."

" And I tell you, you are green."

" Don Bosco, I don't understand you."

" Consider; then you will."

The boy will hardly need ten minutes to find out that he is very like the fig tree in the Gospel, full of leaves, but bearing no fruit.

But now the whole pack has come to a standstill: it is close to the refectory, and Don Bosco wants a laugh to free himself without too much difficulty.

" Look out! " he cries. " Now: the examination is going to begin. Which is the best Piedmont wine? "

" *Barbera, barbera!* " shout those who come from Asti.

" No, no *barolo!* " yell those from the Alba district.

" No, Canelli muscat," cries a boy from that quarter.

" Unless it is *caluso,*" suggests Don Bosco; " you know it, pretty, sweet, golden wine, that runs like syrup."

" Yes, *caluso, caluso,*" they now roar all together.

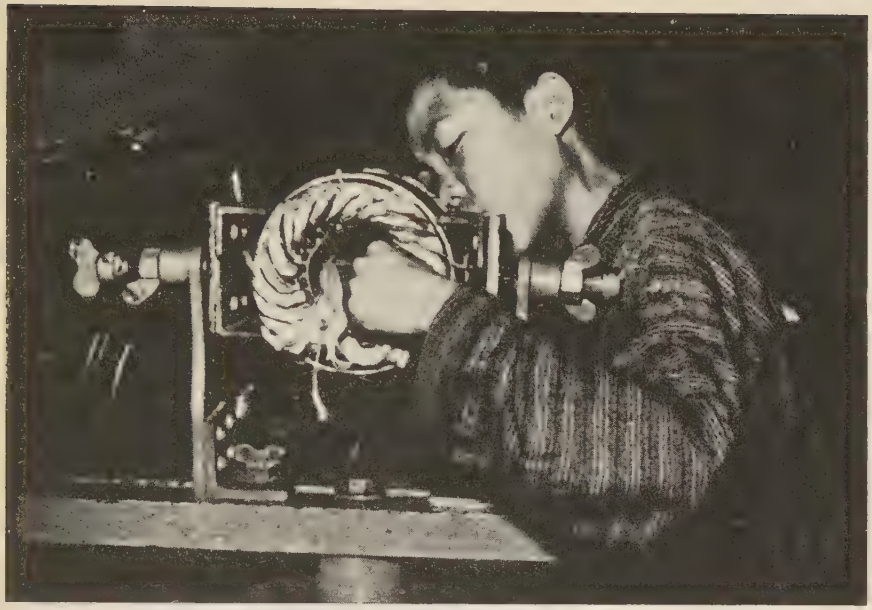
" Very well: you are all mistaken."

" Then, what is it? " ask the boys.

" Why, you little duffers, the best wine — is what I have in my glass. What good are the rest, if I can't get them? "

And after this quip, which is greeted with general merriment, the Father sends his children back to play, and opens the door of the refectory.

It strikes nine. Don Bosco has just time to swallow his little cup of coffee and to go up to his office: now begins the torment of interviews. The antechamber is already full. This is the stiff tribute saints have to pay for their celebrity. As soon as they appear they are overwhelmed. Renown, which already was spreading fast and far enough, had now been increased tenfold by the activities of the press, and it quickly collected all those who suffered in soul or body round the Servant of God. If you are ever a saint — well, you will have to pay for it. And every morning, ten, twenty, or thirty, people, on getting up,



In a Salesian Technical School on the Missions.

School of carving in a Salesian Technical School.

say: " I am going to see him and talk to him, or ask for advice, or state a difficulty, or ask for a miracle." Poor Don Bosco! How often he must have regretted his mornings of days gone by, the blessed and happy times when, after having said his Mass, he had only to help his mother, to sweep the house, to draw water from the spring, to peel potatoes for lunch, to cut out some trousers or to prepare for an evening lesson! He had no more time of his own then than now, but his present cross is far heavier, for now for three hours every day without a break, in spite of his painful infirmities, he remains nailed to his armchair and has to listen to little grievances.

These tales are almost always pitiful. There is a vocation to be examined; here is a mother, who has a prodigal son, to be consoled; now some secret misery has to be surreptitiously helped; endless family disputes have to be listened to; or someone wants to ask for support in trying to obtain what is merely a vain bauble; or else a soul on the edge of the abyss has to be rescued from a temptation to despair or to passion; or it may be an impostor appealing for money; or perhaps an excellent priest or chaplain asking for a sermon, a triduum or a novena, and only Don Bosco will do; or a father wants advice about a son's career; and then there are those with incurable infirmities or diseases who kneel at the feet of one who is known to be a saint, waiting for the blessing of Our Lady, Help of Christians, to send them away cured.

Often she does so, as in the case of the little boy of nine who has come in this morning with his father and mother from Villafranca, wildly hoping for a miracle. The legs of the unfortunate child are so twisted that he cannot walk: he has to be dragged along or carried. He has never been able to put one foot before the other. The Saint blesses him and says: " Have confidence in the Blessed Virgin, my child, and put your worst foot forward." The boy hesitates, and then, as Don Bosco repeats his order, obeys. Supported by his parents, he puts forward first one foot and then the other; then they let him go, and the sick child begins walking by himself. " Dang it, can't he trot along! " cries his daddy. " Come now, speak decently," mother corrects him, sobbing in her emotion. And off go the pair, blessing Don Bosco and looking astounded at their son running on in front of them.

How often did such happenings occur in Don Bosco's room or in the antechamber! They were innumerable. When the pilgrim or the

visitor passes through them, his feet are on holy ground, where Mary, Help of Christians, has touched diseased bodies or sick souls with her healing hand.

Confronted with such miseries, an immense pity filled Don Bosco's heart, and no one could turn him aside from his work of charity. " Poor people! " he said. " I cannot resolve to curtail their talks; still less can I avoid their requests. Some of them come such a long way! Some of them are in such distress! They relate their troubles with such confidence! They are so patient in the antechamber, waiting on hour after hour. They have to be satisfied: it is my duty, it is my God-given call."

" But, Don Bosco, could you not find some means of diminishing the number of interviews? "

" Yes, I know one."

" And what is it? "

" I could pretend to be cracked or an imbecile. Then they would say: ' Don Bosco is off his rocker,' and the antechamber would empty as if by magic. But it would not look very pretty, nor would it work; for the Salesian Congregation wants everybody."

And every morning he forces himself to undergo the heavy burden of remaining immovable, always at attention, conversing till he is exhausted, with an empty head and worn-out chest. This penance alone, said Father Oreglia, S.J., would have been enough to prove the heroism of Don Bosco's virtues.

At midday, when the *Angelus* rings, more than one client is still waiting in the antechamber. The Saint welcomes them with patience, as if they were the first comers in the procession, and listens to them and gives them advice. His hunger cries out for mercy, his head holds out no longer, his limbs stiffen with cramp, but his smile never leaves his face. Finally, between half past twelve and one, his involuntary torturers leave their victim, who can now go down to the refectory.

His first spoonful of soup often coincides with his Son's dessert. Moreover, his religious do not wait for him before running to join in the games of their pupils. Their place is immediately taken by a troop which is lying in wait for them to go out. This is the best seasoning for his slender meal, the presence of the boys who ask him questions and answer his own, drink in the least of his remarks, laugh heartily at his jokes or merely watch him eat; and it is also, for his indefatigable

apostolic zeal, a precious opportunity for slipping in, without appearing to do so, a reflection or an anecdote that will carry on the work of education.

Two o'clock. The striking of the hour suspends the fatherly talk and the boys are back in the schoolroom or the workshop. For Don Bosco this is the sacred moment which, in his hustled day, he had inexorably kept for himself. From two till three o'clock the Saint is there for nobody, or for very few indeed; he is at prayer. They know that he is at the Oratory, and everyone respects the solitude of one who has so many undertakings, so many souls and friends and benefactors to recommend to the goodness of God, so much guidance to ask Him for, so much strength to implore for his next step, so much thankfulness to pour out for having been appointed, poor shepherd boy from Becchi as he was, to reap such a wonderful harvest.

But he has not too much to wait: a heavy post has come in and is ready for his replies. In his bureau he will not find the quiet hours needed for writing them: every quarter of an hour, if he is known to be there, his assistants, creditors, purveyors, benefactors and boys will come to disturb him. The importunate must be avoided. Then Don Bosco takes up his voluminous parcel of letters, some paper and envelopes, and goes out. He goes to some friendly house, now to this one, now to that, where he cannot be found. There he is known, and also why he is coming. The work table is ready with ink, pens and stamps. Till nightfall the Saint will be clearing off the greatest part of his correspondence.

To one of his religious, who appears to be forgetting his Father, and perhaps his own soul too, he writes:

" My dear child,

" I have received several letters from you, always with the greatest pleasure. Write still more frequently, and do not be afraid of being too long. Perhaps your excuse will be that you are overwhelmed with work; I know it. Nevertheless do not forget, while you are busy with other people's souls, to think of your own. Never forget your monthly recollection. Here, everything is going on well, and even making giant strides. When one of our Salesians is nearly ripe, there are always two Houses competing for him. Sometimes they are very tender plants that we thus have to expose to dreadful winds. So pray to our good God to protect them and make them bear fruit. You will always be as dear to me as

the pupil of my eye. Work well. Our reward is waiting for us some day in heaven. *Ibi nostra fixa sint corda, ubi vera sunt gaudia.*[1]

" Pray for me, who remain ever, at the bottom of my heart, yours very affectionate . . ."

To another Son, whose character must have been rather caustic and who was perhaps rather slack, he writes as follows:

" My dear Sappa,

" Try to make your name come from *sapere* (be good) and not from *zappare* (to sap or dig down), and all will be for the best. Someone sends me news of you. Do your best that the news may be always good, as it used to be. Work and obedience will make you happy. May God help you to give good example always. Pray to Him for me, as I pray for you, and believe me, your ever devoted and affectionate . . ."

To one of his earliest friends, Canon Guiol, rector of the parish of St. Joseph at Marseilles, who seems to be losing patience at the laborious beginnings of the Oratory in that town, he gives these very decided promises and directions:

" Dear Canon,

" I understand your uneasiness about the poor staff of the St. Leo Oratory. Two other priests and a cleric who will shortly be ordained to major Orders, will join Father Bologne. And I promise you more afterwards in proportion to your needs. As far as it depends upon myself, I shall make it my duty to second your generous ideas. But we are now at the beginning of the school year, and I have four more Houses than I had last year to provide with their staff: so you can judge my perplexity. Nevertheless, I want you to be satisfied with the Salesians, for you are one of our best friends and Co-operators.

" I cannot get to Marseilles before the end of the autumn. But whatever you decide in agreement with Father Bologne will be decided rightly, and I will subscribe to it with both hands.

" The need of enlarging the House does not escape my attention: it is really too small. But where can we get the money? Just now I have none at my disposal. Next year, however, I think I shall be able to spend 100,000 francs on this Oratory.

1 Amidst the changes of this world, let our hearts be there fixed, where are true joys.

" Perhaps from time to time Father Bologne may need some money. Please be so good as to advance it to him up to a few thousand francs. Tell me the amount of the loan and I will make it my duty to repay it within a few days in full, unless your charity reveals a desire to let us off a little of it.

" At present we have Father Roussel, of Paris, in Turin, and he wants to combine his Institute with ours to ensure its continuance after his death. I tell you this, because I know the good Father is returning to Paris by Marseilles, and will visit our Oratory in the latter town and have a talk with you.

" May God keep us both in His holy grace.

" I am, etc . . ."

Here is a letter to one of his most generous Co-operators, written a few days after an audience with the Holy Father:

" My Dear Signor Galvagno,

" In a private audience with His Holiness I ventured to mention your name as one to whom I had often had recourse when my finances were at a low ebb. The Holy Father listened with pleasure to all I had to say and then remarked: ' What can we do in return for the good man? ' I replied, ' I think he and his family would be very grateful if your Holiness would grant a special blessing to him, his wife and especially to his little ones, that they may all grow in health and the holy fear of God.' ' Well, Don Bosco, I grant that with all my heart.' Then I said, ' I also beg for another favour.' ' What is it? ' ' That the Galvagnos and all their relations to the third generation included may have a plenary indulgence every time they go to Confession and Communion with the right dispositions and pray for your Holiness.'

" ' *Rem difficilem postulasti*! However, as it is not beyond my authority, I grant the favour, provided that they make frequent use of it. Communicate both of these things to them on my behalf.'

" I thanked him and now I am fulfilling my pleasant charge, begging you to communicate the spiritual favour to such of your relations as you think will esteem it duly.

" I beg your charitable prayers and remain,

" Yours gratefully . . ."

Here is a letter to one of his best missionaries, Father Costamagna, who has left only a few days ago at the head of an expedition:

" My dear Son in Jesus Christ,

" The departure of all of you has torn my heart. I pulled myself together, but I suffered deeply. All the night after your farewell I could not sleep. Today I am calmer: God be praised! In this letter you will find one for M. Bergasse, of Marseilles, to whom please deliver it. Do not forget to call on Mme. Jacques, and tell her that the first Patagonian woman you baptise shall be named Agatha.

" God bless you, my dear child, and all your companions, too, and may the Blessed Virgin Mary in her great goodness protect and keep you all.

" Here are a few counsels which may help to guide all the Salesians in America and to sustain their meditation in the course of the retreat that you are about to begin soon.

" I wish I could give you an address on the spirit that ought to inspire all our deeds and words. Let the preventive system be held in honour in all our Oratories. No harsh punishments, no humiliating remarks, no severe rebukes in public. Gentleness, charity and patience: let those be our virtues. No biting words, no slaps nor blows, not even light ones. Use negative chastisements, and those always in such a way as to leave the offenders more than ever attached to us. Let the Salesian try to make himself loved by everyone: no hatred nor revenge; but readiness to forgive, and let us be quick to forget the past. Gentleness in word and deed, and in advice, always succeeds in touching the heart . . .

" Here is a canvas upon which you and the other preachers can embroider your variations during the retreats at the end of the year.

"*Au revoir,* my dear Son! A happy journey! There is quite a host of us praying for you all."

To one of his boys, in the second form, he writes as follows in reply to a letter of thanks:

" My dear child,

" Your letter gave me the greatest pleasure, because it shows me that you understand the affection I have for you.

" Yes, my child, I love you with all my heart; my only wish is to see you advance as much as possible in learning and piety.

" Remember the advice I have given you in many circumstances: to be glad with true gladness, that which springs from a conscience free from all sin. Try, yes, try to be very rich, but rich in virtue, for the

greatest of all riches is the holy love of God. Flee from bad companions; seek good company, and above all trust in the parish priest. To go straight, you have only to follow his advice.

" Greet your parents on my behalf and pray well for me."

But here is one of his most faithful benefactors who has directed a mother and her son to him. He has not accepted him, and he explains why.

" My dear Baron,

" I am very sorry about young Rosso's visit. He has returned home just as he came. I could not take him in: there is no room for anyone. Moreover his mother, who was with him, was dressed in such a way that I asked myself whether I ought to shake hands with her. I could not admit amongst my poor Sons, who for the most part are wholly destitute, boys whose parents are clothed in such luxury.

" I hope that in your kindness you will be indulgent with me, if I have not been able to carry out your charitable wish.

" Please give me the alms of a little prayer, for I am always entirely yours *in Domino*."

And other replies follow these; the pen runs on and on, and pages, always in heavy and ascending writing, follow one another. Night falls, and the lamps are lighted: Don Bosco has to stop. Inexorably, to save the remains of his sight, the doctors have forbidden him to read or write by artificial light. He therefore gathers his papers together and takes the road home. On the way is the Consolata, the old church so dear to the whole of the town. How many memories it recalls: his second Mass, his old mother who used to pray there, Don Cafasso, his first Mass for his mother's soul, his committal of the whole of his family of orphans to the care of Mary the Consoler, the pilgrimage of thanksgiving of his boys at the beginning of the Oratory: He goes in, descends the stairs that lead to the underground chapel and, almost in the great silence of the sanctuary, loses himself in childlike prayer.

In a few steps Don Bosco reaches home. There, they have been waiting for him. The Salesians know that when night has come he is theirs, and they never fail to take up most of his time of compulsory leisure at the end of the day. Before he has had time to put down his things and light his lamp, there is a knock at his door. It is only an hour to supper: he uses it to instruct, to encourage and comfort his Sons — who are to carry on his work — to impregnate them with his

own spirit, and to kindle in their hearts the fire that burns in his own.

Eight o'clock. Family supper time: and this time Don Bosco is not late: he says grace and presides at the meal. A few verses of the Gospel are followed by a short reading. Unfair advantage must not be taken: these poor religious are almost all young fellows, and they need the relaxation provided by lively conversation; and then, they too are exhausted by their day's work; and this is the only place where they find themselves free from all care. All the rest of their time is given to God or to their pupils: it is, therefore, wise and good to let them unbend. There follows a delightful conversation between Father and Sons, full of wit and gaiety and freedom. Here, all is life and confidence and simplicity: such were the qualities that the Founder wanted to impress upon the souls of his Sons and he regards them with pride.

In half an hour they will leave him, and their place will be taken by his younger children. Not a moment of the day will the good Father be left to himself: he will pass from one group to another, entirely devoted to their souls. And the midday scene is renewed, with a still deeper note of hidden affection. Night has fallen, and its great peace and rest are about to envelop them all; at such an hour they seem to become yet more loving and selfless, for to these boys Don Bosco is everything, absolutely everything, after God. How they look at him! How they listen to him! How free and frank they are with him! There is no constraint, no embarrassment, no reserve: it is family life, sweet and holy, as the Creator intended it to be. Who can forget such moments?

Nine o'clock. The bell rings for the end of recreation. At once conversation stops, and the boys go into the field. A hymn is sung by seven hundred voices; and then, all together, they recite the prayers. Don Bosco is among them, kneeling on the cement pavement. His tenor voice is slightly dominant; and its hearty tones emphasize the words of the "Our Father." When prayers are over, they help him up on to a wretched stool. He looks over his young folks with love and speaks. He speaks as a Father to his Sons, with familiarity and affection.

"My dear children, the return you make every evening of everything, however humble, you have found during the day, prevents one from supposing that there are any of you who go so far as to keep as their own anything that does not belong to them. However, the devil is mischievous and might warp your conscience as to such a thing, so let me

remind you that theft is the most dishonourable of all vices. When anybody is caught in the act, it is no good; you cannot get it out of the mind of other people; they think: he is a thief. Do you know So-and-so, say his companions, when they get home: well, So-and-so is a thief, repeats every tongue in the village; and there you are, with an established reputation. Everyone flies from the poor wretch.

" Nor is that all. The worst of it is Our Lord's saying: ' Thieves shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven ' Now, tell me: What can you put into you eye? Nothing; not even a bit of straw. And so it is with paradise. Not even a straw belonging to someone else can get in there. If one of you were to die with a stolen needle on his conscience, he would be pulled up at heaven's gate. It is true that a needle is but a little thing so far as sin is concerned; but the poor little needle, I assure you, must be dearly paid for in purgatory.

" Saint Augustine says rightly: ' The sin of theft is only forgiven if we agree to make restitution.' You will confess your thefts in vain, if you don't make restitution, and you will never get forgiveness. Let us be clear about it: if you cannot make restitution you must at least firmly resolve to make it whenever you can.

" Take care, too, my children, lest the stealing of little things end in becoming very heavy matter of sin. Above all, such thefts are apt to drive you to steal further: today it is an affair of a copper, tomorrow it may be a necktie, the day after that some apples belonging to a school-fellows, and then a book. You may end by running up a heavy account to settle at the judgement seat of God.

" If, then, we would not run the risk of incurring public disgrace, if we would not burden our consciences, let us take care never to touch what belongs to others. We must treat other people's property as we would treat fire. If a spark falls on your clothes, you brush it off at once. In the same way, if there is anything that does not belong to us, however small it is, let us leave it where it is. Do you happen to want anything? Ask your school-fellows for it: they are kind enough to give it you. And if they don't do so, there are your superiors ready to give you that pleasure; of course, so far as they can. Good night, my children! "

A unanimous and loud *Grazie* answers the final wish, and Don Bosco gets down from the stool with the help of two outstretched arms. All the boys then throng round him to kiss his hand before going to sleep.

Some hang behind: they have a question to ask, a trouble to confide, or he has kept them back by a sign. Now is the time for brief dialogues, but how full of meaning and edification.

" How are you? "

" Very well."

" But your soul? "

" Well, as to that . . ."

" If you were to die tonight, are you ready? "

" Hardly."

" Then, when will you come to confession? "

" Tomorrow morning."

" Why not tonight? "

" No: tonight I could not do it well."

" Then tomorrow, and without fail? "

" Without fail; I promise you, Don Bosco."

And the boy goes off.

"I have kept you back," he says to another, " because I wanted to settle a piece of business with you, and to sign a contract."

" A contract? "

" Yes. Tell me: how would you like to stay with Don Bosco always, to help him in his work? "

" I would not refuse. I confess that I have already thought about it; but I did not know how to start the subject."

" Then go and find Don Rua, and tell him I want to sign a contract with you; he will understand."

And thus the Salesian noviciate gets another recruit.

" Don Bosco, I want to ask you a favour," says a newcomer in the fourth form."

" Go on, my boy."

" This is it: I want to go to confession tomorrow at the Consolata."

" Agreed! Only I will send someone with you. And I want you to promise me something."

" What is it? "

" Tell the confessor this, and also that."

Don Bosco mentions one or two sins which have not been confessed previously.

" Oh, then, Don Bosco, I need not go anywhere else to confession. Those were the sins that lay heavy on my conscience."

" Very well, I shall expect you tomorrow morning in my confessional."

And the young schoolboy goes away happy, with a heart almost free.

" Look, Don Bosco," says another boy in deep distress, holding up a letter to him, " read this. It is the procurator who has written that to my sister. She cannot pay the small cost of my board; so I shall have to go."

Don Bosco reads the letter and, as they ascend the stairs, holding the boy's hand in his own, he listens to the story of the difficulties of a family that has been suddenly bereaved of its parents. The story of these calamities brings Don Bosco to the door of his room. The boy is still in anxiety as to the outcome of his procedure.

" Here, take a pinch," says the good Father, putting his old snuff-box under the boy's nose. The boy takes a sniff and sneezes violently, and Don Bosco bursts out laughing, and the little fellow catches the infection from him and thinks no more of his sorrow.

" Come, I am happy to see you happy, little Anthony," says the good Father. " I like you as you look now. Father Procurator is not in bed yet: go to him quickly. Tell him I undertake to pay all your debts, past present and future. I will pay your school fees henceforward."

" Yes, but what if he returns to the assault with my sister, and carries out his threat? "

" Then listen well, and hear what you are to do. You will leave by the front of the House and come back by the door of the church; then the trick will have been played. Do you understand? Now be off to bed, and quick about it."

And the lad goes down stairs, four steps at a time, to give Don Bosco's saving order to the Procurator.

Other boys are waiting for their turn after this one. And after these the superiors of the House, who, at this one free moment, seize upon their Father to put some difficulty before him, to ask for a piece of advice, or to get some encouragement. The file never seems to end. It strikes eleven, and Don Bosco is still there, listening, asking questions, answering and giving himself up to everyone.

Finally, the last of the Salesians goes away. The day appears to be

over. Formerly, when his eyes were well, it went on long afterwards. How often, in those days, working through the night, would he fill page after page of manuscript, which make up an issue of *Catholic Readings*. That, indeed, was in his good old days. Now, he is getting old himself, his strength is decreasing, and night is coming on, the night in which no man can work. "*Pazienza*," he says to himself, good Italian and Christian, as he is, ready to wait upon the holy will of God.

He crosses the antechamber, opens the door on the balcony and raises his eyes to the cupola of the church. There he sees his Madonna. To her goes up the last sigh of his weary heart. Half past eleven strikes: it it time to go to bed. Will it be to rest? It is not at all certain. Some dream may come, which will stir him to the soul until dawn, and leave him exhausted. For all day he has been too busy for the divine will to make itself audible to him, and it often waits for the sweet silence of the night to make itself known to him in sleep.

The man and the saint

When he was alive, Don Bosco, in all simplicity, allowed himself to be photographed or written about. He was photographed confessing his Sons, amidst his first band of missionaries, surrounded with little boys, blessing the Sons of Count Vimercanti in Rome; he was taken in France, in Spain, almost anywhere, sitting with a group of friends or benefactors; and he was made to sit for his portrait, hour after hour, standing, seated or on his knees.

He was also described in character, life and work. While he was alive, several French biographies appeared, which described him with bold touches, and they were sold, and we believe he even helped on their sale, because, as he one day said at Marseilles on returning from a visit to his friends, it all contributed towards the wherewithal for his overcrowded Oratories. At Rome, as we know, during the process of his Beatification, he was severely blamed for it; but the advocate of his virtues found it easy to show the evangelical simplicity of his eyes which, in all that, saw nothing of it as a homage rendered to his virtue, but regarded it as the most modern method of making the good known and loved. As our Lord Jesus Christ recommends us, he was allowing this propaganda to be carried on, not to display himself to men, but that men, seeing these good works, might give glory to our Father who is in heaven. This fine distinction he expressed in these words: " In our own days, the world is plunged into the material: we must therefore make known to it the good that is being done. If anyone, by prayer, works numbers of miracles, but does it only in his cell, the world does not notice it. But for the sake of its soul, the world needs both to touch and to see these wonders."

Hence Don Bosco allowed himself to be photographed and painted and described. Thank Heaven! These concessions to art make our work easier; the testimony of those who were near him also brings its evidence; and the reading of his writings completes it. Under the convergent rays of these three sources of illumination, this is how his physical and psychological likeness strikes us.

He was of medium height: round and full in face, with a broad forehead lit up with intelligence. His hair was dark chestnut, and thick and curly. Its colour remained unaltered till late in life, and only turned slightly grey at end of his days.

His complexion was that of a stout and sturdy Piedmontese peasant. Look at his hands and his knotted and thick fingers: there is nothing aristocratic about them. From that point of view, Don Bosco plainly belongs to the proletariat. His muscular strength was almost legendary. One evening, when a mastiff kept barking at his heels in a deserted street of Turin, he got rid of it by seizing it by the throat and holding it for some seconds up in the air. In 1883 — when he was sixty-eight — he was dining with a friend in Paris, and amused himself by cracking the walnuts, which the guests were scrambling for, between his finger and thumb. A year afterwards, when in bed with fever, the doctor asked him to show him the strength of his grip. " Squeeze my hand as hard as you can, Don Bosco; don't be afraid." — " Doctor, you will repent it," said the invalid. The old man then seized the doctor's hand, and squeezed it so hard in his own, that pain forced tears from the doctor's eyes: his hand was literally crushed. Indeed, the constitution of the Saint must have been thoroughly robust to endure for seventy-three years all the toil he imposed upon it.

People often said of Don Bosco: " Really, he is quite an ordinary person." There was nothing about him that revealed his mission, his profound spirituality or his sanctity. " A good old Piedmontese country priest," his acquaintances used to say. Only his expression showed the fire that burnt in his heart. His clear eyes looked right through you, and their brightness was disturbing. Unfortunately, both eyes grew dim soon after one another: at sixty, their flame had become no more than a glimmer.

His tenor voice had a sweet timbre which was very taking; he spoke calmly without raising it in any way; and its serenity was impressive.

He ever looked neat and clean, but his clothing was always poor, and sometimes even poverty-stricken, yet faultlessly cared for. His boys well knew the importance he attached to cleanliness; before going into his office, they always had to tidy themselves up, and to smooth down their clothes with their hands.

He was always at his ease and perfectly polite. Though the son of peasants, he went to the Vatican or the Court or into patrician households without any sign of awkwardness. His innate good manners made up for the lowliness of his birth.

So deft were his fingers, so supple was his body, that he had only to watch an artisan attentively to learn how to do his work. Thus, in his laborious youth, in order to earn his living, he managed to adapt himself to thirty-six trades; and he learnt every calling rapidly, even that of a clown.

Being of an ardent disposition, his sense of self-respect was intense. Let it be said frankly: he was given to pride. As a small boy, he confessed that obedience cost him very dear indeed; as a young man, he hoped to find a religious Rule, that of the Franciscans, that would yield him the secret of overcoming his particular passion. " Had I not become a priest and a religious," he confided one day to his intimate friends, " I should have been one of the most daring of the liberals."

More over, the talents with which he was endowed were well calculated to foster his pride. His memory was simply prodigious as some of the episodes of his youth prove. One of his favourite Sons, Don Francesia, tells us how in 1858, at the age of forty-three, when in Rome, he saw the Tiber, formerly sung by Horace, for the first time he stood up in his carriage and, like some Humanist of the Renaissance, greeted the historic river in the celebrated lines of the greated Latin classic.

Nor was his imagination less powerful. It was not that of a poet, but of a great architect or designer. He saw things on the grand, on a very grand, scale. It came to him naturally. His optimism was incurable, and his plans were immense. Explain this as you will: we may say that his visions in the night fostered this natural tendency; we may observe that one fulfilment after another justified his anticipations; but we must acknowledge that, in his century, he was, as Huysmans has put it, " a matchless organiser of the good God's business." " Don Bosco wants to be always in the van of progress," said he to Father Ratti, afterwards

Pius XI, when the latter was going through his workshops. In the van: even that was not enough for his ardent imagination; in ten different directions he was ahead of his time. At haphazard, we may mention his press undertakings beginning in 1844, his midday retreats of 1845, his holiday camps of 1849, his first technical schools in 1856. He seems to have been endowed with a special sense for anticipating new ideas and for divining the trend the apostolate of the future should take.

With his eyes fastened upon the ideal world which he wished the actual one to realise, his will was as bold as it was enterprising. " When he had only one penny left, he pledged himself for two," said his good friend Mgr. Bertagna. He never hesitated. He went right on, quietly and calmly, invincible and determined; and always reached the end he had set before himself. With nothing he obtained everything, and this poor builder of castles in Spain gathered crowds about him by the million. He was accused of rashness, yet he actually succeeded in hosts of enterprises that the world called mad.

It is true that he never spared himself any trouble. He was a furious worker. His days were crushing, and his nights cut down to the utmost. He always had some book in hand, some plan in his head, printer's proofs in his pocket, some educational problem in his mind. Neither his intelligence nor his imagination nor his heart knew how to rest. " Stop a while, Father; take a few days' relaxation," his Sons would beg him. " In Paradise, in paradise, there we shall stop, but not before. First of all, the devil must stop ruining souls. Then Don Bosco will stop wearing himself out for them." He worked to such extremities that sometimes nature gave way under the excess of his endeavours: then he went to sleep, standing in the street or, as once happened at Florence, in the office of the President of the Council, Minister Lanza.

Not only did he carry on this struggle with the powers of evil thus intensely by hard toil, but he did it also with the adversary's own weapons. In this matter, he was truly a man of his own time. The boyish episode, in which he contended with the juggler on his own ground and beat him thrice running, is constantly repeated in his career. As Cardinal Maffi once remarked, you can't fight modern heavy guns with medieval crossbows. Don Bosco saw this at once; and he made use of amusements, the theatre, the press and music, to destroy modern

counter-attractions with corrupting influences. His constant cry was: " A fair field and no favour."

These remarks appear to show us a man very unlike the calm, slow and deliberate race which we described in the first chapter of this book. Is he, then, a true son of Piedmont? Yes, and no. In some ways, he stands apart from his people; but in others, he is entirely one of them. His is a disconcerting personality. " The more I study him, the less I understand him," said St. Joseph Cafasso of his penitent. " He is both simple and extraordinary, both humble and great at the same time. Were I not certain that he is working for the glory of God, that he is guided by the thought of God and by nothing else, I should say that he was a dangerous man, more by the glimpses he gives us than by things he makes known to us. Don Bosco, in fine, is an enigma . . ."

" Leave him alone all the same," added this man of God, convinced that his fellow-countryman was a wonderful instrument of Providence.

Yet certain dominant characteristics of this instrument indicated clearly the race from which it came. First of all, he was far from being a speculator or a theorist. He would never put his educational notions into a treatise. He was certainly a man of intelligence, but his intellect preferred keeping to the sphere of reality. Well-intentioned persons have suggested the publication of a selection of his letters; yet what a mistake that would be! Don Bosco's letters are those of a man of action who has a problem to solve, a difficulty to clear up, or to discuss the conditions of life. When his mind leaves the domain of business — God's business, of course — it is to give some counsel, to call forth some truth of faith, never to rise to the contemplation of a mystery or to some short meditation on the Gospels. He is always a man of action.

Common sense, judiciousness, a clear and sound mind, those are his characteristics. He sees things on the grand scale, but within the limits of the possible. If he pursues his dreams, it is because he knows that they are realisable, and because his audacity is sobered, not only by his confidence in God, but by the encouragement he draws from all his previous successes.

Moreover, he never tempted God, and kept to the bounds prescribed by prudence. He never started any enterprise unless its usefulness was evident, and he never destroyed any part of a building until the necessity of a new one was clear. He grafted Colbert on to St. Francis de Sales,

was said of him. His conceptions were bold, but they were carried out with measured prudence: let us remind ourselves of his many devices for eliciting the charity of his friends.

With all this, he was full of finesse and deftness. Though involved in so many infinitely delicate affairs, he always managed to carry them through with the highest possible results. How much suppleness was shown in his solution of the question of the nominations to the Italian bishoprics: it proved him a born diplomat. " Indeed, this Don Bosco is really clever," was often remarked. " You can't catch him out: he always sees what you are driving at." " What a statesman this priest would make! " said some conservatives. " All these holy men are truly wonders of finesse."

" And of wit," they might have added. In this, Don Bosco was never found wanting. A lady asked him to tell her of a good investment for her money: he spread out his two hands wide open before her. Two inveterate gamblers were not ashamed to ask him what numbers they should stake on at their weekly game of *lotto,* a very popular game in Italy. He began by refusing them; then, as they were still urgent, he flung this advice to them: " Back the 6, the 10 and the 14, and then you will win." " Thank you, thank you," said the two, turning on their heels with the certainty of carrying off big winnings. " Let us understand one another," rejoined Don Bosco, " eternal life is what you will gain that way; for whoever keeps the six commandments of the Church, the ten commandments of God, and does the fourteen works of mercy, heaps up for himself treasures in heaven." " The salvation of society lies in your pockets," he said to the rich men of Lyons when they invited him to address them on the social question. " Father, I am not going away, till you have given me your autograph," declared a pestering lady caller. Then the kindly apostle wrote in his heavy handwriting, these two brief lines:

" Received of Madame X, the sum of 2,000 francs for my undertakings. (Signed) *Don Bosco.*"

Evidently, he was never without his smile. As a good disciple of St. Francis de Sales, he was as gay as possible. Like the Bishop of Geneva, he thought that " a sad saint is a sorry saint; " and, like St. Philip Neri, that sadness is the eighth capital sin. As a small boy, he delighted in amusing his companions; as a young man and as a semin-

arist, he enjoyed well-merited renown as a joker; as a priest and teacher, he was the soul of all the games played in his Oratory; and one of the pivots of his educational system was always joy, true Christian joy, delighting in the possession of the grace of God, in the testimony of a clear conscience, and in the proper use of the creatures of this world.

Of St. Vincent de Paul it was said that, as he undertook nothing with levity, he gave up nothing from discouragement. The same praise was deserved by Don Bosco. He had the calm persistence of his people; and, like Cavour, he knew how to temporise; how to give way when necessary, in order to react more vigorously. If any difficulty barred the way, he thought it useless to attack it wildly: that would perhaps lose time and hurt yourself. Everything comes to him who waits. Don Bosco's energy of will was no less than his other gifts.

Perhaps more striking, because more daily in request and more apparent, was his equable humour. His slow, very quiet and slightly grave speech manifested his peaceful serenity, which after long perseverance had entire control of his impulses. His imperturbable calmness had deeply impressed a young priest from Milan whom he had invited to his table and put up under his roof in 1883. When this priest had become Pius XI, he emphasised this feature of the saint's character in these words: " Oh, Don Bosco, Don Bosco. We once came into touch with him: how calm, yes, how calm he was! A commanding character indeed! "

But his dominant characteristic was his goodness of heart. It was seen in all kinds of ways. Towards his benefactors it appeared in his infinite gratitude. A sixpence given him was enough to move him, and he showed his thanktulness in ways of almost feminine delicacy. One of his benefactresses was trying to get a nest of young sparrows to amuse her grandchildren, and one day it was brought to her in a little basket from the Oratory, and all the nestlings were piping with their beaks wide open: it was Don Bosco's present, and he had never rested till he had secured the desired gift for her. He never forgot to write to any of his friends and co-operators on their feast days; and when one of them sent him some game from his covers or early products from his kitchen garden or a few good poultry from his farmyard, he thanked them profusely, but never failed to testify his gratitude to this or that family of benefactors with these selected gifts.

With regard to his boys, his kindness showed a truly maternal affection. Their troubles were his own; their joys too were his. When he had to be away from Turin, he kept constantly in touch with his distant Sons by praying for them and writing to them. It was his happiness to live as much as possible in their midst; his pride consisted in seeing them stick firmly to the path of duty. Of the dreams that he had at night, eight out of ten had to do with his Sons. In the first days of the Oratory, this love of his went so far as to make him take upon himself any sickness they were suffering from: fever, toothache, headache or neuralgia. " Come, be brave and give me a few of your aches," he would say to the sick boy. The child would then run off to play, and leave his illness to Don Bosco. This phenomenon was observed more than fifty times. " Then I was mad," he confessed to his religious later on. Mad he always was, for he loved his young people with a love that had neither measure nor reason in it; he sacrificed his whole life to them. Like the great Lacordaire, he could say at the end of his days: " If my sword is worn out, it has been done in your service."

And yet, how they returned that love of his! His hold upon them was quite unrivalled. Whenever, at any moment of recreation, he appeared on the balcony or in the doorway, he was greeted with cheers, followed by a rush towards him. He could have led his seven or eight hundred boys wherever he wanted. Their faith in him was absolute. " What a strange power he had over us! " one of them said to us recently — he is now a sturdy old man of eighty-four — " If he had one day said to us: ' Now boys, follow me; we are going down to the river, and it will open before us, as the Jordan did for the Jews,' we should have followed him without hesitation, believing we should go through the river on dry ground, in his footsteps." And another of his old pupils, belonging to the same generation, completed the story with these words: " Everything in him seemed ordinary, quite ordinary: yet he could have led us wherever he wanted. It must have been God who spoke to us through him and bound us to the man."

In an audience granted him by Pius X on July 20, 1914, Mgr. Salotti, one of the advocates of the Cause of the Saint, said to the Pontiff: " In studying the voluminous register of my client, I am more struck by his inner spiritual life than by the vastness of his work. Many know nothing of him beyond his manifold foundations; they are quite

or very nearly ignorant of the wonderful and patient upbuilding of the spiritual life within him by his daily, hourly and unremitting exercise of the virtues proper to his state and calling."

In thus speaking, he was right. He might have added: " The greatness and gigantic growth of his work can only be explained by the richness and fruitfulness of his spiritual life. A blushing face reminds us of the heart that beats to tinge its hue; the ripe fruit, as it hangs on the tree, makes us think of the hidden roots that drive the sap upwards till it forms their substance; and thus, the prodigious development of this man's activities must be traced back to its source in his soul. There lies the secret of all his foundations and of all his conquests."

There was the burning centre, and that centre filled his apostolic life with energy. Let us try to reach that *cor cordium*, which has hitherto been attained by very few.

Generally, indeed, he has been dealt with in the old hagiographic style: a list of episodes and incidents has been drawn up, his virtues have been labelled, and no principle of unity to link them together has been provided, nor has any bird's-eye view of the whole been sought for.

The starting point of his interior life and the strenght which bore it from one height to the next, these are certainly not easy to determine. Evidence is still lacking, and we are too near to our subject. But the fact itself: the soul's absorption in Christ and His Mother, its inner apprehension of its close fusion with God must strike everyone who is neither shallow nor superficial.

What has led some astray is the eveness of the life of Don Bosco, the absence of external mystical phenomena in his relations with God, the very simple texture of his daily life, and his jealous care in hiding " the King's secret." In truth, " he was an enigma," as Don Cafasso said; but happily, his undertakings were there to reassure him, his manifold foundations started by the most peaceful of men, by the most ordinary of country priests. In their daring and variety, and in their solidity, they proved that their originator drank from the fountain-head of all light and strength, and that he had given himself up to it and was at one with it.

His Archbishop, Cardinal Alimonda, in his funeral sermon on the Servant of God, uttered the truest word about him: " The inward and

divine virtue, which was the mainspring of this wonderful life, was heavenly charity." Yes, that, and nothing else.

His biographers speak of his spirit of penance. Certainly, that too was wonderful. He slept only five hours a night, and the dawn often caught him still at his worktable. He never troubled about what he ate or drank; he never complained of the tiring work of the confessional; he shortened his life by running hither and thither for money; he bore the heavy crosses laid upon his shoulders submissively; from 1845 until the day of his death he suffered from constant eczema, which made the religious, who had to clothe him for his burial, say: " Oh! what a hairshirt! And fancy how he always kept it concealed! " But this spirit of penance was only his way of living in detachment from creatures, never becoming possessed by them; unless it was his way of offering, in the secrecy of soul, his body as a holocaust to his beloved Master.

His scruples arising from his purity were both surprising and moving. So great was his purity that he shrank from using the word " chastity " lest it should awaken some untoward thought. To the very end of his life he knew nothing of certain forms of vice. According to the testimony of those who were nearest him, he carried his baptismal innocence to the grave. For some who were suffering from temptation it was enough to keep close to him in order to feel it leave them. According to one of his favourite Sons, Father Barberis, he would have liked this virtue to be the charcteristic of his Congregation. From his person, his touch and his speech some secret virtue seemed to emanate which entered into and purified souls. Even from his way of taking a boy's hand or placing his own upon a boy's head, you felt he had an infinite respect for the body of anyone who had been baptised. Lastly, he who was so merciful for any other delinquency was ruthlessly severe for scandals in morals. Indeed, his purity was angelical. What else was it than an expression of the faithfulness of his heart and body to a beauty, a love and a joy that had finally won possession of them?

About himself Don Bosco was always most humble. He said for instance: " Had Our Lord found a still more wretched instrument for His undertakings, He would certainly have chosen it rather than myself, and He would have been better served." On an evening of one of his triumphant days in Paris, he set the lowliness of his birth over against these vain honours. " Do you remember," he asked an intimate friend,

" the little path to the right running up from the road to Buttigliera and leading to a little hill? On the hill is a poor cottage, and in front of it drops a bit of a field. That hut is my mother's house, and in that field I used to tend two cows. All these fine gentlemen, who have overwhelmed me with compliments today, never think they are paying them to an old cowherd." — " What is the finest thing you ever saw? " he asked a boy in the playground one day, never expecting the prompt and spontaneous reply: " Don Bosco." — " Come now, you remind me of a good peasant, who came to look at the prizes in our last lottery. While everyone else was delighted in admiring some work of art, he stood with his eyes fixed on a huge sausage. He could see nothing finer than that." These sincere and repeated confessions of the poverty of his birth, his wits and his virtues, what did the Saint mean by them but not to filch from the glory of his Lord and Master, and to praise His power and wisdom and goodness, since He had chosen him for His own work; and this, too, was a genuine expression of his love.

His confidence in God was extreme. He had the faith that moves mountains. He never doubted as to the outcome of any undertaking. If he were only sure of his usefulness, he was certain of its success. Obstacles might arise; he laughed at them, while fighting against them or getting round them. Financial or other means might be lacking; if they did not come in today, he expected them tomorrow. " The main thing," he said, relying upon a long experience, " is to take the burden on one's shoulders. As you go forward, the load finds its balance and shakes down." The hardest humiliations, the bitterest disillusions, the strongest opposition all left him smiling. Whence came his serenity? One of his panegyrists give the answer: " He abandoned himself in the arms of God with the uttermost love."

To him, the love of God was one with the love of souls. The second commandment was like the first and greatest. Not only did this love of souls make him relish all the miseries of the way, but it also inspired him to pray with an almost wild boldness. At the beginning of his work he asked his heavenly Benefactress for a thousand places in Paradise, and he tells us he was given them. Later on, confronted with the unexpected growth of his enterprise, he went further and asked for ten thousand places. At last, seeing his Houses all over the world, he was still more pressing, and asked for a hundred thousand reserved seats for his Sons.

And this time, too, he was certain of having been granted them. It is said, indeed, that his burning zeal went even further than that . . .

His simple and calm audacity in expressing the deepest of his desires, the salvation of souls, enables us to surmise the degree of intimacy he had reached in prayer. In truth, such prayer was the very life of his soul. One of those who knew him best said: " He seemed to live in a state of permanent contemplation. He worked, indeed, upon the earth, but his spirit was up yonder, in heaven."

" No one is a great man to his valet," says the proverb. It is, however, to his servant that the saint is a great man, says a close observer. But here is the testimony of three witnesses of the secret virtues of the Saint. " I lived with him for twenty-five years," declares his servant, Peter Enria, " and I have seen him always praying. How often I discovered he was praying when he was going upstairs, or in his room after work! " And his secretary tells us: " For more than twenty-five years I have been a witness of his perfect union in spirit with God." To this union one of his favourite Sons has given its true name. " It was continuous contemplation," says he. " And he gave us the impression of coming from a colloquy with God, when he gave us any advice at our request."

Many, we know, have thought that prayer held but a small place in his timetable. They are mistaken. His life of intense activity, his dread of anything singular in his devotion, the absence of certain mystical phenomena in his relations with God, all these have put them on the wrong track. But his intimate friends were not deceived: Don Bosco was incessantly in union with Christ and His Mother. There was no ecstasy, no irradiation of countenance, no uplifting from the ground; but, most certainly, he used all forms of prayer, vocal or mental, and especially, that which suddenly elevates the soul till it confronts some divine truth, embracing it in a single view and possessing it with rejoicing.

This humble and diffident priest never made any claim to be the founder of a mystical school; but had he started any system of asceticism, he would probably have based it on the old saying, in its fullest and truest sense: " To work is to pray."

His own work never was apart from God. It was done under God's eye and for Him only. And the manifold occupations of his hustled days, far from destroying his serenity, only bound his heart more closely to

its source of light and strength and love — Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary, and their servant never ceased feeling them at his side.

A thick veil separates our world from the next. Most never think of the other, or do not worry about it. For the mystic, the curtain sometimes rises. Then, supernatural enlightenment fills his mind. Almost always the mystic is wide awake when such wonderful revelations occur. But they are sometimes given during sleep, and in dreams. Then the divine revelations come, as Jesus came into the Cenacle, while the doors of the outward senses are fast shut.

Undoubtedly it was thus in dreams that Heaven disclosed its will to Don Bosco, putting him on his guard against dangers or giving him the light required for his apostolic mission. As Job says: " God speaketh by dreams in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men," and such dreams were not lacking in the case of St. John Bosco. How often they foretold his coming trials, and the work that he and his Sons were to do! How often he read, as in an open book, the state of conscience of his children or the close of their days! How often he learnt the means required for the fulfilment of his enterprises! How often the future of the Church or of nations was shown him symbolically!

We have given one or two samples of this in many of our preceding chapters, but there were hosts of others, so that we do not hesitate to speak of these as divine interventions. Don Bosco was neither a rash nor a reckless man, as Huysmans remarks: he would never have wagered so heavily, had he not believed that Heaven had invited his ventures. And he expresses his firm conviction in these words: " My responsibility is indeed alarming. What a fearful account I shall have to render to God for all the graces He has given me! It may be said of Don Bosco that he sees clearly, and that the Blessed Virgin leads him step by step. At every moment and in every circumstances it is she who appears. It is she who visibly protects us from all dangers, shows us what we are to do, and helps us to accomplish it."

How right then was Cardinal Vives y Tuto, the first deponent in the Cause of his Beatification, in affirming that he had never seen any dossier so overflowing with the supernatural. And it was Pius XI who, two months before the Decree of Beatification, proclaimed that in his life " the extraordinary had become ordinary, and the supernatural natural."

Here is a fresh proof of it, perhaps unique in the story of mystics, and how touching!

At Toulon, in 1878, Don Bosco had made the acquaintance of a family which showed him unusual benevolence up to the end of his days. Its generosity towards his undertakings ranked it amongst the best of his benefactors. It may be said that millions of francs passed from the Count de Colle's safe into his enterprises. Whenever the latter happened to be in serious difficulties, he started for Hyéres and returned with his hands full.

The noble married couple had a beloved son, as delicate as he was intelligent, an angel of purity, gentleness and goodness. Don Bosco knew him for two years, and had a deep affection for him. Each winter the old man and his young friend used to meet, and Don Bosco once more saw this young Louis on his deathbed, a few days before an attack of consumption carried him off from his bereaved and weeping family at the age of seventeen.

The relations of Don Bosco with the young Colle, intimate as they had been while he was alive, took a truly wonderful turn immediately after his death. Though no longer seen with mortal eyes, Don Bosco kept meeting him at every step on his way; in some circumstances he received from the lad's lips the commands of Heaven; and several times they talked with one another as intimately as during the days of their earthly friendship.

Only the Saint himself could tell us of these strange occurrence; but we cannot doubt his word.

A few days after the lad's death, the Servant of God, after saying Mass, was hearing confessions in the sacristy of Our Lady, Help of Christians, when he suddenly had what he calls a distraction, in which he saw young Colle in a delightful garden playing with other boys, and his face was shining.

A few weeks later, on May 27, the day after the Ascension, the Saint was saying Mass in the same church for the intentions of the Colle family, who were at the Holy Sacrifice, when, at the moment of the consecration, his eyes once more pierced through the veil into the beyond and saw the youth shining with glory and gladness. After Mass, he found him kneeling by his side during the final prayers; and in the sacristy, he again stood before him with the same look; but this time he

was surrounded by a band of youths who had died in that House in the odour of sanctity.

On July 3 of the same year Don Bosco wrote thus to Madame Colle: " On June 21 last, the feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, at Mass, after the consecration, I saw your son as I had known him on earth, but his rosy face was shining with a radiance as dazzling as the sun's." On August 30 he wrote again to the lad's mother: " On the 25th of this month, the feast of St. Louis, King of France, at the consecration I had the joy of seeing your son even more radiant than usual. He was in a garden with other young companions, and they were all singing '*Jesu corona virginum*' with a tone and a harmony that no man can tell." And on very many other occasions, at the altar, at table, in his room and elsewhere, his unforgettable young friend appeared to him: the vision was like a flash of lightning, said the Saint, and he added: " It could not have lasted any longer, for I should have fallen down fainting, as I could not have endured the splendour any more."

In 1882, on the third Sunday after Easter, at Rome, in the sacristy of the church of the Sacred Heart, the youth appeared to him as a man who was drawing from an inexhaustible well, a clear symbol of the infinite graces to be obtained from devotion to the Sacred Heart. In 1883, at Hyéres, and again during Mass, Don Bosco saw Louis Colle showing him a region of South America still awaiting the Salesian missionaries, and heard the lad say to him: " Make the children receive Communion frequently, and admit them early to the Holy Table. From the age of four or five, show them the Sacred Host, and make them adore it in order to prepare them for their first Communion."

In April 1883, at Paris, in the church of Our Lady of Victories, where he was celebrating Mass, Don Bosco, at the moment of Communion, saw young Colle before him. The Saint stopped administering the Sacrament, being lost in the vision, and the assistant priest thought he was ill, and finished giving Communion in his place. On May 14, 1884, Don Bosco had to wait four hours for his train, and had a long talk with his young friend, who promised him a notable improvement in his health, which actually took place next day. Lastly, during the night of May 10, 1885, he saw the youth for the last time, but of this vision he thought well not to speak.

What a wonderful spiritual spectacle is revealed in these confidence given us by the Saint! We see them both, the veteran and the lad, walking side by side and talking heart to heart. The roles are changed: formerly, it was Don Bosco who directed young Louis in the ways of the Lord; now it is the lad who takes the old man by the hand and leads him along God's paths. Thus was it ordained that a young French lad should help in the work of the great apostle. In the gardens of Paradise, this angel of purity continues to show the fidelity of his gratitude to his old friend. Death is indeed but a vain word to those who love one another in the Lord.

Such frequent communications with the other world, such revelations of heavenly secrets were enough to disturb the powers of evil. With his influence already threatened by the undertakings of the apostle, the prince of this world, as Christ calls him, was upset by such faithful assistance from on high. His hatred for redeemed souls, whom the apostle was saving by the thousand, did its best in hosts of ways to sterilise the endeavours of the Saint. From the year 1862, the latter had to suffer persecutions that were indeed infernal.

Preferably at night, the devil constantly tormented him. In this matter, we have the victim's statements to rely on. To Father Cagliero, Father Bonetti and Father Ruffino, who found him pale and exhausted one February morning, he confessed that the devil pestered him in the night: and he gave them details.

Sometimes the evil one howled in his ears, sometimes he let loose a tempest in his room, sweeping all his papers off the table; on one occasion he kept on chopping up blocks of wood, on another he made flames shoot forth from the stove which was out. Or else he dragged the blankets off the bed, or shook the bedding violently. A sign of the cross would put a stop to the attack, but soon afterwards it would start afresh on new lines. He would utter harsh and sinister cries which filled Don Bosco's heart with fear; he would make a frightful din above the ceiling, as if a squadron of artillery were galloping across it furiously; he would shake the Saint by the shoulders, or sit sneering on his breast; he would make a table waltz round the room; he would draw a frozen paint-brush across his forehead, nose and chin; he would lift up all the bedding and let it fall with a sudden crash; he would make the doors and windows rattle for more than a quarter of an hour on end; and he

would appear to his victim under the forms of fierce wild beasts, bears, tigers, wolves, snakes or else of indescribable monsters rushing savagely upon him.

Having been informed of the facts by Cagliero, a few of Don Bosco's most courageous and strongest disciples, Savio, Bonetti and Ruffino, made up their minds to watch at his door. But after a few minutes, they fled in terror: they could not stand the hellish uproar.

Don Bosco himself was sometimes exhausted after the conflict which did not allow of a single night's rest. Once even, when he could hold out no longer, he took refuge at his friend's, the Bishop of Ivrea. The first time, everything went off splendidly: all was calm. The Saint flattered himself that the devil had lost track of him. Unfortunately, the attack began again next night. He had taken the precaution of talking business affairs with the good Bishop until one o'clock in the morning. But he had not been asleep a quarter of an hour, when a hideous monster arose at the foot of his bed, roaring with rage and gathering himself together for a spring. Thereupon Don Bosco uttered so loud a cry as to awaken everyone in the house. They ran to find out the cause of the alarm. He replied that a nightmare had smitten him with terror, and made him shout thus. Next morning, at breakfast, he confessed everything to the Bishop, and that evening started off to Turin, giving up the idea of dodging his adversary.

What was the reason for all this fury? Doubtless the harm Don Bosco was doing to hell, the number of victims he was snatching from it, and, perhaps more than all, the thought of the ravages to the kingdom of evil that would be wrought by the young Congregation, which in that year was going to show its vigour by the religious profession of its first twenty-two members.

Some special reasons may perhaps be added to the above. Don Bosco long considered that the active part he had taken in the opening of the Catholic school at the other end of Turin, close to the Oratory of St. Aloysius, would make an offset to the Protestant school, and that it was not for nothing in these diabolical assaults. Above all, he was convinced that by enduring such attacks he was turning aside the wrath of hell, and thus was protecting the souls of his boys.

" Why," asked one of them, " when you returned from Ivrea, did you not exorcise the devil, as you told us you would? "

" But if I drive him away from myself, it is you who are attacked."

" Then, the night he let you alone at Ivrea, did he make mischief here in Turin? "

" Just so, that is what happened," answered Don Bosco. " That night he did much mischief at the Oratory."

" But why don't you ask him what he wants? "

" Who has told you that I did not? "

" And what did he answer? " his clerics asked him anxiously.

Don Bosco thought it best to make no reply to this question. " Pray " was all he said. And they did not fail to do so.

By degrees Don Bosco began to recover his exhausted strength. Nevertheless, his struggle with the spirit of darkness lasted, with irregular intervals, more than two years, until 1864.

One evening, when Don Bosco was quietly telling some of his intimate friends of these witches' sabbaths and of the dread that the mere thought of them gave him: " Well, for my part," interrupted one of the youths, " I should not be afraid of him."

" Hold your tongue." Don Bosco cut him short so decisively that everyone was struck. " Hold your tongue. You don't know how far, with God's permission, the power of Satan can go."

" Yes, indeed, I do. Why, if I saw him, I would take him by the throat, and you would see."

" You are talking nonsense. You would die of fright at the very first touch of him."

" But I would make a sign of the cross."

" That might stop him for one minute."

" Then, what did you do to repel him? "

" The way to put him to flight, I know well. Since I have used it, he has left me in peace."

" And what it it? Holy water? "

" Sometimes holy water is not enough."

" Oh! tell us the remedy," they begged in chorus.

" I know it, I have made use of it, and it worked: how well indeed! "

Then Don Bosco held his peace, keeping his secret to himself.

Of this dialogue, we need only remember this: that one day, by some means unknown to us, but which one can easily guess, the Servant of God finally crushed the assaults of the evil one.

When the long fight was over, we may believe that, as in the Temptation in the Gospel, the angels of God visited the victor. Moreover, they had never ceased doing it, since never were the heavenly communications so precious and comforting as during these years of torture. From without, when " poor Don Bosco," as he called himself, was seen passing by, acting, busy at his unnoticed work, talking or chaffing with his boys, who would ever have suspected that his soul was the scene of such phenomena, and that, by turns, Heaven was inundating it with brightness and Hell with horror? By the contrast between his humble appearance and the splendour of his soul, we are driven to acknowledge that this man makes a great figure in the train of sanctity. There are some Saints more impressive, greater wonder-workers, more world-wide in their sphere of influence, to be found throughout the twenty centuries of Christianity; but there are few more striking and more taking personalities to be met with in the history of the Church.

The last years

About 1880, Don Bosco made the following jottings in a cheap notebook: " An attentive eye might be rather astonished at the quite special characteristics that distinguished each of the decennial periods that followed the foundation of the Oratory. The first, 1841-1851, is the period of the *Wandering Oratory*; the second, 1851-1861, is that of the *Establishment of the Oratory*; the third, 1861-1871, might be called *Expansion beyond Turin;* and the fourth, *The World-wide Expansion.*" This account is very accurate. In fact, from 1871 onwards, the Salesian Society, with its fifteen Houses in Italy, already crosses the Alps and settles in France, at Nice, Toulon and Marseilles; in Spain, at Utrera; or steers for South America, to settle in Uruguay, and in the Argentine, at Montevideo and Buenos Aires. God's benediction truly rests upon it, and Don Bosco dreams of supernatural colonisation are being realised one after another.

But this rapidly advancing apostolate, in its invasion of the world, needs an abundance of labourers and constant reinforcements: how are they to be found? Close at hand, in his Houses; alongside of his Oratory, among the generous laymen who were helping it with their devotion. Moreover, among the apprentices in his technical schools as well as among the society people who came to his assistance, Don Bosco soon saw that there were labourers of the sixth, of the ninth, and even of the eleventh hour, waiting with folded arms to be hired. It was this observation that gave rise to the Work of Our Lady, Help of Christians, for Late Vocations."

The practical mind of Don Bosco very quickly distinguished two classes amongst these young men: those whom serious previous studies

had already prepared from afar for the priesthood, and he formed them into what were then called *scuole di fuoco* (*intensive courses*): the others — apprentices who showed a desire to become students, or youths who were late in beginning their Latin — for whom he opened, at the Turin Oratory, special courses for Late Vocations. This took place about about 1872.

In 1877, this semi-tentative period ended with the opening, at San Pier d'Arena, near Genoa, of a regular House for Late Vocations. In the same year the Saint secured a special benediction from Pius IX for this work. In 1884 Don Bosco wanted to keep this Association close under his personal supervision, and transferred it to Mathi, near Turin. It then numbered sixty students. And lastly, it reached its full maturity at Turin, in a college near the church of St. John the Evangelist. A thought thoroughly steeped in the sacerdotal and Eucharistic spirit had inspired the Founder's mind: he desired these young men, who were preparing from afar for the priesthood, from the very beginning to serve the altar in that much frequented church. The cleanliness of the sanctuary, the chants and the ceremonies, were to be cared for by them, and they were thus to lead a life divided equally between their learning and the liturgy.

In 1884 the Association counted a hundred and forty students. It was to supply the diocesan clergy with hundreds of recruits, and the Salesian Congregation with bands of apostles who, both in Europe and in foreign missions, became leaders.

Had Don Bosco foreseen all these results, they would not have astonished him. He had long anticipated what such an Association could do. He remembered how, at Chieri, in 1832, a day-boy in the little Seminary, himself with rather a late vocation, since he was sixteen when he went into the sixth form, he had patiently given evening lessons in Latin to the cathedral sacristan, a good fellow of thirty-five and a marvel of piety for a sacristan, who wanted to become a priest at all costs. His steady efforts had succeeded in filling that rather wooden head with enough knowledge amply to enable his pupil, at the end of his compulsory course of study, to gain admission to the Major Seminary. This old and never-forgotten memory must have sustained the Servant of God's courage in the difficult moments that beset his new foundation.

That may be said to have closed the series of his various foundations.

Henceforward Don Bosco does no more than consolidate his undertakings, or else propagate them throughout the world.

One of his dreams had always been to see his Sons established in Paris. He felt the immense dangers, both moral and spiritual, that beset the young who had to grow up amidst the tempations of that famous capital.

He was sixty-eight when he undertook his famous journey through France. His body was very tired; his legs were very old; his eyes were almost gone; in walking, he had nearly always to rely upon his friend's arms; he was aged and worn-out; but some secret force urged him towards Paris; and he did not try to withstand it.

He left Turin on January 31. In the early days of February he was at Nice, where a charming incident occurred. Returning from a visit to some friends, he wanted to cut short by crossing the Paillon on a poor wooden footway which then connected the two banks. Owing to his bad sight he stepped aside and fell into the torrent. He was soon drawn out; but he was drenched to the skin, and they had to take him to the Salesian House close by. There an unforeseen difficulty cropped up: Don Bosco had no cassock to change into, and there was not one to spare in the whole House. The good old Father had to go to bed. " Ah, well," he cried, " this is indeed a real Don Bosco House! "

He spent the whole of February at Nice gathering strength for the heavy work ahead of him. Then he went via Toulon, Marseilles and Avignon to Lyons. Everywhere on his way crowds flocked eagerly to him, begging for his prayers, advice and benediction. The sick in body or in soul thronged around, watching his lips for the word that converts, and his hands for the touch that heals. " These sights are like those of Ars, and I thought I was back there again," wrote the holy Curé's first biographer, Father Monnin, when he saw the popular enthusiasm. At Avignon, on April 2, when the train was about to start, the crush was so great that the passengers could not get into the carriages. " Look, what a deluge, Don Bosco! " remarked his secretary, Father de Baruel. " One more reason for giving them the slip," answered the Saint, with a twinkle.

At Lyons, on April 8, he went up with the pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Fourviére. Mgr. Guiol, the rector, and Dom Pothier assisted at his Mass. To the crowd that thronged the church he gave a short

address; and then, as it was impossible for everyone to get into the church, he gave a second blessing outside, in front of the rector's house. A similar triumph took place on the days following at five churches at wich he spoke.

One morning he said Mass at the Vault of Saint Pothinus, a famous relic of the early piety of the people of Lyons. On the zigzags of the hill, a thick crowd surrounded the carriage and impeded its progress. The horse was a quiet animal and quietly pushed his way through. But it was a long, slow process. The driver might have had more patience or devotion, and he ended by losing his temper. His ill-nature at last burst forth in some words that have passed into a proverb: " I had rather drag the devil than drive a saint ".

On April 14, the day before he left, there was a remarkable meeting fo the Geographical Society of Lyons. Don Bosco gave a lecture to the learned gathering. He spoke of far Patagonia, where he had long been following in thought the apostolic labours of his Sons. The scientists were bending over the map while he spoke; and the lecture was lively and full of detail. He set forth interesting information as to the fauna and flora of those regions, as to their geological curiosities and metalliferous wealth; he described the undulating or broken outlines of their hills and coasts, their mountains and rivers; he explained the curious customs of the natives. Soon the astonished professors no longer followed on the map; they fastened their eyes upon the energetic lecturer, who spoke as one inspired and as if he were a beholder of far-off things.

They asked him: " Father, whence did you obtain your information? Whence did you get all these new facts? " Don Bosco did not reply. He could not do so; they would never have believed him. It was in a dream that he had beheld those unknown lands, with his dear young friend Louis Colle as his guide. And the Geographical Society of Lyons paid him the compliment of awarding him a gold medal.

On April 16 Don Bosco left for Moulins, and on the 19th he arrived in Paris, at his good friends de Combeau in the Avenue de Messine. He had been preceded by his letter-bag, with a flood of envelopes which had alarmed the concierge. But this was nothing to the flood of people who called there, and at the Mlles de Senilhac in the Rue de la Ville-l'Eveque, where the Saint held receptions every afternoon.

How can this affluence, this anxiety of the capital to see and come

into contact with this man be explained? A fortnight earlier his name was hardly known there; and now an irresistible force impelled the people towards him, and they were among the most curious, but also the most sceptical and most difficult to beguile of any in the world. His outward appearance had nothing to do with it. " He is old, he is infirm, and can scarcely hold himself up," wrote a journalist. " He is a little man of simple and modest appearance, without affection or pomposity or magniloquence," remarked the *Figaro*. " He wears a soutane of coarse cloth, his gait is unsteady, his sight worn out; he lacks distinction and eloquence of speech," remarked Father Delaporte at the opening of a congress. This was true: but in his person he reflected something of the sanctity and charitable genius of St. Vincent de Paul, and Paris is never insensible as to such things. Then he did miracles; certainly less than was said, yet, as Madame Claudius Lavergne wrote, quite enough to justify the enthusiasm with which he was welcomed.

One day, between two receptions, the father of the Marquise de Bouille came to beg him to call at his house, where his grandson lay dying. Don Bosco comforted the old man by declaring that the child, though Extreme Unction had been administered the night before, would not die. After the receptions were over, he went to see the little sick boy who had been sentenced to death by the doctors, gathered the family together, invoked Our Lady, Help of Christians, with them, and left the sick child's bedside, assuring everyone that he would soon be convalescent; to the astonishment of the medical attendants, he began to get well next day.

A somewhat similar occurence took place a few days later, after a charity sermon by the Saint on April 29 at the Madeleine. A weeping mother, Madame D—, came to implore him in the sacristy to hasten to the bedside of her little daughter, a girl of twelve, whom a malignant fever had brought to the very door of death. Don Bosco let himself be led thither, and together with the whole family he prayed Our Lady, Help of Christians, to bring healing to the house. Then he said: " Now leave your little sick girl in peace, and let her rest." They followed his advice, and next day the child got up completely cured. She is still living and has become Madame de R—.

The press seized upon these marvellous occurrences at once, and their notices brought crowds of sufferers in soul or body to the places

where Don Bosco was staying and to the churches where he was preaching. The *Univers* of April 28 applied to the Saint the well-known lines taken from the Office of St. Antony of Padua:

Si quaeris miracula:
Mors, error, calamitas,
Daemon, lepra fugiunt,
Ægri surgunt sani.[1]

On May 2 the *Figaro* supplied the following information to its readers: " For the past week the religious world has talked of nothing but Don Bosco and his Oratory. The Italian St. Vincent de Paul is now spending a few days in Paris, and returns on Friday to Turin, loaded with gifts for his Orphanages. Long lines of carriages have been standing in the Rue de la Ville-l'Eveque before the house he is staying at for a full week. The highest ladies in society are begging Don Bosco for miracles for themselves or for their relations, and he is said to work them easily."

Such paragraphs, revealing the enthusiasm or astonishment of Paris flinging herself at the feet of a saint in the middle of the sceptical nineteenth century, might be quoted from the columns of hosts of other French papers.

All this was far more than was needed to multiply the clients of the Saint tenfold. A lady of high position observed: " Never has such a Paris crowd gathered round a priest since the visit of Pius VII." This was true. Nor did Don Bosco succeed in meeting all the demands of his admirers. Before the pile of letters that snowed him under day after day, he hastily summoned Don Rua to come to the rescue of Father de Baruel in answering his correspondents. " If we had seven secretaries here," wrote Don Rua to a friend, " many letters every evening would have to be left unanswered."

Every evening, too, more than one visitor had to be shown out. To satisfy everyone, the Saint would have had to spend whole nights in receiving them. He would, indeed, have done it, but at about eleven o'clock he was thoroughly tired out.

1 If then you ask for miracles:
Death, error, all calamities,
The leprosy and demons fly
And health succeeds infirmities

He rose at five in the morning. As soon as he had finished his prayers he began receiving people, from six till half past seven, in the great salon on the first floor of the Avenue de Messine. Then a carriage fetched him to say Mass in some parish church or community or private house. After Mass the crowd was still on the watch for him, and, in the sacristy or some neighbouring room, he went on listening to their troubles, encouraging, enlightening, comforting and blessing them. About eleven o'clock he tried to get free so as to go to the Avenue de Messine for a light lunch; and at midday he was to be found at the Rue de la Ville-l'Evéque, ready for all callers. He only reached home about ten at night, where he rejoined his secretaries, signed letters, and wrote a few himself until about midnight, when, after spending some time in prayer, he went to bed, thoroughly exhausted and dead beat.

No ordinary spectacle was afforded by the house in the Rue de la Ville-l'Evéque. Two hours before the Saint arrived, the antechamber was quite full. Numbers were distributed, and people stood on the stairs and even in the street. From every corner of Paris, from every rank of society, they flocked to him, some for enlightenment, others for healing, and many for peace of mind.

" During my short stay in Paris," he once told an intimate friend, " I had to deal with more than a hundred cases of conscience, a single one of which would have been enough to take me to that great city."

Many of his visitors had to be satisfied with seeing him, without speaking to him or getting his blessing. Others were more fortunate or more persistent, and managed to reach him.

One night they introduced to Don Bosco a caller who was quite unknown to him. After three hours' waiting, the visitor's turn came, and it was eleven o'clock. We have Don Bosco's account of this interview.

As soon as he had entered, the unknown one spoke as follows: " Don't be alarmed, Sir, if I tell you that I am an unbeliever, and that I, therefore, have no faith in the miracles that some people talk so much of."

Don Bosco replied: " I don't know to whom I have the honour of speaking, and I don't want to know; I can assure you I have not the remotest intention of making you believe anything you cannot admit. I shall not speak to you of religion: you don't seem to me to be anxious

that I should. Nevertheless, tell, me this: during the whole course of your life, have you always been of the same opinion? "

" When I was a child, I believed in the same way as my parents and friends; but, as soon as I was able to reason and think for myself, I set religion aside, and I have since lived as a philosopher."

" What do you mean by ' living as a philosopher ' ? "

" Living a happy life, without believing in the supernatural or in a future life, which are the means used by priests to frighten simple and ignorant people."

" And what do you yourself acknowledge in the way of a future life? "

" Let us lose no time in dealing with that question. I will talk about the future life when I get into the future."

" I see you are joking; but since we are talking on the subject will you be so good as to listen to me? In the future, some illness may happen to smite you suddenly."

" No doubt," replied the stranger, who looked a strong man, though already advanced in years.

" And might not some of these illnesses bring you to the grave? "

" That is inevitable."

" And when your last hour comes, will you not have to face your eternal lot? "

" I shall take heart, because I am a philosopher and do not believe in the supernatural."

" And what is to hinder you, at least, at that moment, from thinking of the immortality of your soul, and of your religion? "

" Nothing: but it would be an act of weakness which would cover me with ridicule in the eyes of my friends."

" Nevertheless, when you are at the end of your life, it will cost you nothing to secure peace of conscience."

" I think that is so, but I do not believe it is necessary to lower myself so far."

" If that is your case, what do you hope for? Soon, the present will no longer belong to you; as to the future, you will not hear it spoken of. What, then, do you hope for? "

The stranger lowered his head: he was reflecting.

After a moment Don Bosco went on: " You must think of your final lot. You have still a short time left to live: if you take advantage of it to return to the bosom of the Church, and ask for God's mercy, you will be saved, and saved for ever. In the other alternative, you will die as an unbeliever and a reprobate, and all will be over with you. You will have nothing to hope for but nothingness, as you say, or eternal punishment."

The old man answered: " You are talking to me in a way in which I see neither religion nor philosophy; you are speaking to me as a friend whom I do not refuse to listen to. I know that among all my friends who are very learned in philosophy not one has solved the problem. I want to meditate on what you have just said to me, and, with your permission, I will come and see you again."

He grasped Don Bosco's hand, gave him his card, and left him. Don Bosco then read his caller's name: it was " Victor Hugo."

The great poet came back a few days afterwards, and said to Don Bosco, as he shook hands with him: " I am no longer the man I was the other day: I was playing a joke on you, when I introduced myself as an unbeliever. I am Victor Hugo, and I beg you to be so good as to be my friend. I believe in the immortality of the soul, I believe in God, and hope indeed to die in the arms of a priest who may be able to recommend my soul to the Creator."

This happened in May, 1883; but, on August 2 of the same year, Victor Hugo sent his will to Auguste Vacquerie, in which occurred the well-known words:

> " Je refuse l'oraison de toutes le églises,
> Je demande une prière á toutes les âmes,
> Je crois en Dieu." [1]

This can hardly be called consistent! But the first of these contradictory utterance was an aside whispered in the shade into Don Bosco's ear between half-past eleven and midnight. The second may,

1 " I decline the prayer of all the churches,
I beg a prayer of every soul,
I believe in God."

indeed, have been meant for the gallery. In which are we to find the very bottom of his soul? Why not in the avowal which gave a glimpse of it to St. John Bosco, in the course of that midnight visit, paid after the manner of Nicodemus?

On arriving in Paris, Don Bosco went first of all to greet Cardinal Guibert. At the end of his audience the Cardinal said to him:

" Preach a charity sermon at the Madeleine on behalf of your Oratories; then yourself go the round of the congregation: you will see how generous they are."

" I don't dare to do it," replied the Saint. " My French is too poor. Someone else would do it better."

" No, no; it is you who must speak. Paris will only listen to you. Go, then, in all confidence. I bless your attempt beforehand."

Rarely did any blessing yield more abundant results.

On Saturday, April 28, before visiting any other church, Don Bosco decided to go and invoke the Blessed Virgin in her favourite sanctuary, so dear to the heart of Paris, Notre-Dame des Victoires. The Saint said Mass at the altar of the Archconfraternity for the Conversion of Sinners. This Saturday Mass, which is usually very much frequented, that morning drew a huge concourse of people. It was timed for nine o'clock, and at seven the church was already crammed. As someone was loudly expressing his astonishment at the sight of the closely packed crowd which he could not get through, a poor woman said to him by way of explanation: " You see, it is the Mass for sinners, and it is going to be said by a Saint."

Those who had not been able to get in that day, and over-flowed into the Place des Petits-Pères, met next Sunday afternoon at Vespers at the Madeleine. The church was as full as if one of the greatest of orators were expected. The doors had to be closed against newcomers at two in the afternoon. Even the altar steps were thronged. All the prie-dieu had been removed from the nave, and there was still no room. The crowd was so dense that Don Bosco could not get through to the pulpit, even with the help of the beadle. Everyone was catching hold of his hands, trying to kiss them.

And Don Bosco preached: certainly, not as an orator. His French was hesitating, his voice had neither the sonority that thrills the masses nor the golden timbre that charms men's ears, nor the tones that stir the

heart. His calm and slow gestures, his somewhat dim sight, his plain appearance, were not such as make a deep impression. His was but a poor rhetorical equipment! Nothing but his humility could have emboldened him, despite of it, to confront this Parisian congregation, so appreciative of the charm of the spoken word that for it everything is summed up in eloquence, and that it takes any fine orator at his own valuation.

Don Bosco just told them of the growth of his charitable undertakings, and showed why his Houses ought to be supported, scattered on all sides as they were, with thousands of children in them receiving their daily bread for their bodies as well as for their souls.

They could only hear him with difficulty, and could hardly understand what he said. But the elegant audience was gripped, and when the most titled names began to make the collection, gold coins fell into the alms-dishes; and in a few minutes ten thousand francs had been gathered in.

On May 2 similar scenes of devotion and generosity were repeated at Saint-Sulpice, where the poor old man was still more overwhelmed after Mass, despite the most elaborate efforts of the clergy and church functionaries to protect him from the enthusiasm of the crowds. They insisted on securing his blessing, cut pieces off his old soutane to keep as relics, and brought the sick to him, until it was long before he could gain the shelter of the presbytery, upon which they again flung themselves as soon as they heard that he was there.

Many other famous Paris churches witnessed equally striking manifestations of a veneration that was sometimes indiscreet, but always stirring. But this programme, which recurred in parish after parish, had an unexpected variation at Saint-Pierre-du-Gros-Caillou, an aristocratic church on the left of the Seine.

Cardinal Lavigerie happened to be in Paris, and had been requested to preside at the meeting. How astonished was Don Bosco, on entering the pulpit, to see sitting just opposite him the Archbishop of Carthage! An unexpected meeting between two apostolic souls, the one all serenity and Salesian mildness, the other all fire and victorious ardour.

And Don Bosco spoke. In a French of his own, full of simple charm, but which, from time to time, though not at all hesitating, seemed to hang a little upon the grammar or the dictionary, he set forth his views

on the education of the children of the poor, on the urgency of such an apostolate, and on the need of opening a centre of Salesian life worthy of the metropolis in the heart of Paris.

Then he stopped, and up rose the apostle of Africa to recommend the collection strongly to the crowded church.

" As soon as I heard that the St. Vincent de Paul of Italy was in Paris, I had only one desire — to meet him in one of our churches and to recommend his undertakings to the charity of Catholics. I have seen his Oratories begin in Turin, and then expand and enter into France, and there become a link of benevolence and peace between the Catholics of the two nations.

" Having myself been called to fulfil a similar ministry in Tunis, I am happy, my brethren, to remind you of the great idea of St. Paul, that we are but one body, all the members of which should help one another.

" This is what you are doing, Father, in taking and bringing up the little French boys; this is what I am trying to do in Tunis in loving as my own the children of my Italy.

" You will tighten the bonds between us, my brethren, by coming to the assistance of this humble and holy priest. When he returns to his own country, let us enable him to say that France is ever faithful to her great mission, that she protects all those who suffer without distinction, without knowing of any frontiers between our peoples.

" I live in a country where the St. Vincent de Paul of France was formerly dragged by force and subjected to two years of slavery. Today Tunis wants a new St. Vincent de Paul brought thither, not by force, but by love. That St. Vincent de Paul is yourself, my most dearly beloved Father. With your religious family you will fulfil better than any one else the work of conciliation and peace that we must have.

" Father of so many children, I make an appeal to your heart. It has already responded to the prayer of Europe and of America. It is Africa who now presents to you her neglected sons. Your heart is large enough to take them in. Send them your religious. Both of us together, we will love them, and together we will teach them to bless the name of God and of France.

" And you, my brethren, you will soon be giving your alms to those who will be stretching forth their hands to you. Remember that, in

giving them, you will be helping two causes, that of your religion and that of your country."

There is no need to add that, after such an exhortation coming from such lips, first of all the collection was abundant, and next, that Don Bosco could not resist such a cordial and glowing appeal. He promised his assistance to the great Cardinal Lavigerie, and solemnly pledged himself to send his Sons as soon as possible to help the Primate of Africa in his apostolate to the young people of Tunis.

Don Bosco not only accepted invitations from parishes; he bore his benediction and his kindly smile to Colleges and Associations and Communities. He was seen at the great Stanislaus College and the boarding house of the Dames de Sion. He celebrated Mass at the Chapel of Perpetual Adoration in the Avenue de Friedland, and at the house of the Princess Blanche d'Orleans, where he had as server Prince Czartoryski, whose son became a Salesian. Seven princes and princesses were present, and the Comte de Paris was a communicant. On May 2 he went to the meeting of the Œuvre des Orphelinats Agricoles at the Lazarits'. It was very like his own; and on May 22 he honoured with his presence the gathering of the Conseil de Paris of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. He was quite in his element among these gentlemen, since, in 1850, he had worked to introduce the Conferences of charity into Turin, and, from the beginning of 1853, had four of them in his Oratories in that town.

The apostle of the Catholic Press, the friend of the lowly and the poor, could not leave Paris without visiting two Institutions of the most recent apostolate: the *Croix*, and the Little Sisters of the Assumption. One of his first stopping places in Paris was at the headquarters of the *Pélerin*. Father Picard showed him over the buildings in Rue François Ier. Saint admired, encouraged and blessed the enterprise. The press had been one of the dreams of his life: it had consumed a large part of his time, but what consolations had it given him! He could not help smiling at the boldness of these venturous apostles. May not Don Bosco's smile and holy benediction have done something for the enormously growing output of the *Bonne Presse*: which, day after day, Sunday after Sunday, and year after year, disseminates its Catholic leaflets and tracts and magazines and novels and almanacs throughout the world?

Rue François Ier naturally led on to Rue Violet and the wonderful

Servants of the Poor, the Little Sisters of the Assumption. Their Founder, Father Pernet of the Augustinians of the Assumption, fetched Don Bosco to celebrate Mass in the chapel of the Mother House. On the way, he asked the Saint:

" Is the Institute I have ventured to found along with Mère Marie de Jésus according to God's will? "

" Oh, be quite easy about that," replied Don Bosco, " it is surely the will of God."

The wonderful increase of this religious family and the fruits of salvation which it gathers wherever it is established have proved the soundness of this assurance, given in a cab, by a saint to a great Servant of God. At Rue Violet, Don Bosco said Mass in the presence of a full congregation. The attendance was so great that the gates of the street had to be closed. After saying Mass, Don Bosco went up to see the Révérende Mère Marie de Jésus, who was dangerously ill. He blessed her, and then said to those around her, who were hoping for a cure: " Let her be, let her take her departure."

We should never finish if we tried to recount all the striking episodes of Don Bosco's memorable visit to Paris. We must therefore confine ourselves to the final benediction he gave to the city after his call at the headquarters of M. Josse in the Rue de Sèvres, near the Square of the Bon Marché. After fulfilling his promise to meet the ladies and others who had gathered at M. Josse's publishing and bookselling business, he held a general reception, lasting from half past one till nearly seven o'clock, when he had to keep an engagement at the other end of the town.

The carriage was ready, but owing to the dense crowd in the Square, how was he to reach it? Two sturdy men fended him from the crush on either side, while a third clove the way through it ahead of him. At last, ever smiling and giving blessings, allowing all who wished to touch him or give him their alms, he got into the conveyance with his hat off. But it was quite another business to get the horse to start; amidst the pressure of the masses, it could not move forward. Finally, very very slowly, by seizing the spokes, the wheels were forced to turn.

A cry now broke forth: " Don Bosco, your blessing! "

Thereupon the old man stood right up in the carriage. His features were twitching with the depth of his emotion. He felt the heart of the

great city beating close to his own. And then he took in all the vast crowd, now increased by the accession of numbers of working men who were leaving the factories, in the sweep of his blessing, while these words fell from his grateful lips: " Yes, I bless you all, all of you, my friends and along with you I bless France."

This generous Paris, which had given him such a royal reception, which had flung a hundred and twenty thousand francs into his bag for his enterprises, and for the House to be opened two years later at Ménilmontant, was never out of his memory. Seven days before he died, seeing Mgr. Richard at the foot of his bed and begging for his blessing, he was heard saying in a low voice: " Yes, I bless your Grace, I bless Paris."

He left Paris from May 5 to 19, stopping at Amiens on his way to Lille, where his Sons had been invited to take over the work of the good Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul at the head of a boy's Orphanage.

At Lille Don Bosco was specially made much of. They scrambled for him, and when he was dining with his friend, the Count de Montigny, his host asked to listen to a dozen invitations he had accepted for him. When the list was finished, Don Bosco rose and, after a few words of thanks, added: " Usually the programme offered me runs something like this: at such an hour, Mass; at such an hour, Office; at such an hour, Pilgrimage. But here, it is all very much alike: dinner after dinner." His keen eye perceived that, in Flanders, both stomach and table played no insignificant role on the social stage. But not to damp his host nor the guests to whom he was speaking, he added: " Well, so be it! The Lord be praised for the good meals He provides for Don Bosco! "

At Lille again, and perhaps more than anywhere else, crowds of Catholics stifled in swarming to get near him. They got up on the chairs, calling out: " The Saint! The Saint! " Nor was it without great discomfort to him, for the fanatics came armed with scissors, and snipped out pieces of his cassock to keep as relics. Though not getting angry, he sighed in resignation and said: " Well, I see that all the lunatics are to be found at Charenton! "

On leaving the north of France, the Saint had sent to his hosts at the Avenue de Messines a wonderful sapphire which a lady of Barcelona had given him in her gratitude for the cure of her husband. " Have it valued," and then draw as many thousand-franc banknotes as you can

for it." It was put into a lottery. Almost all the boarding schools visited by Don Bosco took tickets. On Don Bosco's return, the draw took place. There were about two hundred present at de Combaud House at the time. It was another Spanish lady with a single ticket who was the winner. She at once went up to Don Bosco, knelt down and returned him the ring, saying: " Accept it once more, and put it into another lottery." Don Bosco thanked her and smiled.

A few days later, on May 26, he left Paris, but after arriving at Turin on May 31, he soon had to be off again. This time it was owing to repeated and urgent requests to go to the assistance of the Comte de Chambord, who was seriously ill and getting rapidly worse. The Saint replied that he could not face the tiring journey after his last tour in France, but that he would pray for the Count himself and make his boys pray fervently for him.

Then the Comte du Bourg was sent on behalf of the little Court at Frohsdorf. As he writes in his *Mémoires*: " Dead or alive, I meant to take the miracle-worker back with me." The Count took with him other influential friends of Don Bosco to strengthen his plea, but again he met with a definite refusal, owing to the exhausted state of the Saint. At last, however, the Count thought of an argument that might prove effective. " In France," said he to Don Bosco, " they will take your refusal very badly." This time the courtier made a hit. At the idea of grieving the hearts of the French, the poor invalid came to a decision, after taking some time for reflection, and replied: " Well, they first sent me a telegram, and I replied with a telegram. Then they sent me a letter, and I replied with a letter. Now they are sending me a person; and so I must reply in person."

That night, accompanied by Don Rua, he set out. The journey lasted two nights and a day, during which he could hardly take any food, so little was the strength he had left, and so worn out was he by the length of the journey.

After he had said Mass at Frohsdorf, he was told that the Comte de Chambord was expecting him in his room. The Saint nodded his consent and began his thanksgiving. In ten minutes' time he was told the Prince was still expecting him. He again nodded, but did not move. When he thought fit, he rose slowly, and gladly accepted an offer of a light

repast, which he was partaking of peacefully when a third messenger came to say that Monseigneur was asking to see his visitor.

Don Bosco then went to the Prince's room and had a short conversation with him. He had not left the room two minutes, when the strong and clear voice of the Comte de Chambord rang out: " Du Bourg! " he called. The servant ran to his master's bedside and heard him say: " Du Bourg, I am cured: I shall get over it this time."

As a matter of fact, that Sunday, July 15, was the feast of his patron St. Henry, and he allowed all those around him to come and offer him their good wishes; and the reception did not tire him. Furthermore, that evening, at dinner, to the great surprise of everyone, he was brought into the company of his guests in a wheeled chair, and clinked his glass of champagne with them. They thought he was saved. Don Bosco himself cherished the same hope.

When asked by Comte du Bourg about the future prospects of the descendent of St. Louis, the Saint replied: " Monseigneur will never reign; but I hope the Blessed Virgin will restore his health."

Did she cure him? In view of the unexpected catastrophe that fell upon the head of the House of France a few weeks later, opinions are divided. The facts seem to have provided the doctors and historians with an insoluble problem which they may still be discussing fifty years hence, hence there is little use in entering into it.

As for Don Bosco — after making the Prince promise that, if cured, he would himself go to give thanks to Our Lady, Help of Christians, at Turin — he started peaceably, on the morning of July 16, for that town.

The Saint was certainly not exaggerating when he affirmed that he was quite worn out, for a year later we find that Rome, too was anxious as to his state of health, and through Cardinal Alimonda, Archbishop of Turin, was sounding Don Bosco to find out upon whose shoulders he would like to unload some of his responsibilities. " The Holy Father," wrote Cardinal Jacobini to the Archbishop, " sees Don Bosco's health deteriorating from day to day. He therefore fears for the future of his Oratory. Would Your Eminence, with all the tact required by such a step, approach him to designate the religious who, in case of need, would be worthy of replacing him, or of now taking the place of

Vicar General with the right of succession? The Holy Father reserves to himself the right of choosing between these two alternatives; but strongly desires Your Eminence to fulfil this mission at once, as it touches the best interests of the Oratory."

On learning of Leo XIII's anxiety, Don Bosco, on October 24, 1884, informed his Chapter of it, and they at once saw the bearing of these arrangements. The long silence with which the communication was received showed that the mere hypothesis of a possible separation disturbed every heart with the most grievous pain. Four days later, after taking counsel with God, Don Bosco informed his Chapter that he had decided to select Don Rua for the office.

Rome accepted the choice of the Saint with satisfaction, and Leo XIII ordered a decree to be drawn up conferring upon Don Bosco the power of making the nomination.

Ten months later, in a circular dated September 24, 1885, Don Bosco made this announcement to the whole Congregation: "After much prayer to God, after having invoked the light of the Holy Ghost and the special protection of the Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, and St. Francis de Sales, our Patron, relying on the faculty granted me lately by the supreme Pastor of the Church, I name as my Vicar General Don Michael Rua, now Prefect of our Pious Society. Henceforth he will take my place in the full and entire exercise of the government of the Congregation."

The letter from Cardinal Jacobini, who announced this nomination, also contained the following comforting news: Leo XIII was raising to the episcopal dignity one of the first Sons of the Saint, Don Cagliero, already nominated Vicar Apostolic of northern and central Patagonia. The announcement gladdened the heart of the Founder, but it did not astonish him. Since the time of the cholera in 1854 he had known what would happen: he had even predicted it in veiled language. Today it had taken place.

It was on December 7 that the Bishop-elect was consecrated in the church of Mary, Help of Christians. After the ceremony, the new Bishop met his aged mother, whose eighty-eight years had not prevented her from attending the consecration, on the threshold of the sacristy with Don Bosco. Mgr. Cagliero flung his arms round his beloved mother; and

then turned to Don Bosco who, with his biretta in his hands, was awaiting him.

The Bishop kept his hands hidden beneath his garment, for he would not allow anyone, not even his mother, to kiss his episcopal ring. Don Bosco wanted to seize his hand and press it to his lips, but his Son had already flung himself into his arms. Only after a long and affectionate embrace could the Saint succeed in kissing his ring.

Tired out as he was, Don Bosco yet recovered enough strength, in the spring of 1886, to undertake the heavy fatigue of going to greet his Sons in Spain. He went through the south of France, by Nice, Toulon, Marseilles and Montpellier, to Barcelona.

It was three years since his triumphal Paris expedition, and the capital of Catalonia gave him a welcome of unexampled warmth. No king could have had a more glorious reception. At the chief station, the highest religious, civil and military authorities of the town were waiting for him. Forty landaus on the adjoining square were ready to drive him to the Salesian House at Sarriá. The crowd that was thronging to see and acclaim him and to get his blessing was so thick that the procession from the train to his carriage took more than an hour.

And during the whole of his stay at Barcelona, these demonstrations of enthusiasm never ceased. The number of visitors who daily flocked from the town to the Salesian Oratory in the neighbouring outskirts kept on increasing. All classes of society were to be found in this swarm of admirers: ladies of the highest nobility and eminent representatives of the secular and regular clergy, workmen and wealthy employers, journalists and the poorest of the people. There was no room in the Salesian House at Sarriá to receive them; and so bands of persons had to sit down patiently at the roadside and wait their turn.

So great was the affluence that groups had to file past Don Bosco by fifties. The Saint gave them medals of Mary, Help of Christians, and his blessing. Later on, they were driven to have recourse to still more practical methods; from time to time Don Bosco appeared on the balcony and gave his benediction to crowds that were constantly renewed.

Between these interminable gatherings, when the Saint went into the city to call on his chief benefactors, the good people of Barcelona in order to see him go by and to get his blessing, not only stood jammed

together in the windows, but they piled up on the roofs, climbed into trees and hung on to gas brackets. The little light railway service between Barcelona and Sarriá had to double its journeys and put a second engine on to its overloaded train.

As at Turin and as at Paris, divine Omnipotence seemed to have put itself at the disposition of the Servant of God, and miracles occurred.

On April 13, while about thirty persons were besieging the Saint in his room at the Sarriá College, a poor young girl of fifteen wormed her way very painfully into his presence. Her right hand and right leg were dreadfully twisted. " Where does it hurt you? " asked Don Bosco, giving her his blessing. " Here in my hand," she answered. " I have never been able to move it." As she was speaking, she showed it to Don Bosco, and opened it and waved it about. The Saint smiled, and then told her to walk. This she did at once. At her side, her mother was sobbing for joy. " Until Corpus Christi," then said Don Bosco, " every morning you say thrice a *Pater*, an *Ave*, and *Gloria*, not for a cure, but to thank the Blessed Virgin Mary for having obtained one for you."

A few days later, a lady came to the Saint with her three sons, of whom one was a baby of two whom she carried in her arms. She begged Don Bosco to bless them so that they might always be good Christians. The Servant of God raised his eyes to heaven, kept them looking up awhile, and said to their mother, before blessing them: " Of these two big boys we will make religious; but this little one is for me." This prediction was fulfilled: the two elder became religious, and in 1900 the youngest joined the Salesians.

We have no room to say more about these scenes of popular devotion. During the whole of his stay in Barcelona, the triumphs of the Saint in Paris were repeated with a perhaps still more glowing fervour: the warm blood of Spain and the Catholic ardour of that noble nation mingled together in an endless acclamation.

The day before his departure, on May 5, Don Bosco wanted to make a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to the church of Our Lady of Mercy, so beloved in Barcelona. He was welcomed on the threshold of the sanctuary by the President of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, who, surrounded with a group of the chief persons of the town, advanced to meet him and said: " To perpetuate the memory of your passing through our town, these gentlemen have resolved to offer you the possession of

Mount Tibidabo,[1] which overlooks Barcelona, so that you may build a church to the Sacred Heart on it."

Don Bosco replied with tears in his eyes: " Oh, gentlemen, I accept your offer with all my heart, and thank you for it. Know then, that you are, at this moment, sent to me by divine Providence. After leaving Turin for your beautiful country, I kept asking myself what I could do towards building some pious monument in honour of the Sacred Heart at Barcelona; and as I was on my way, a voice constantly seemed to murmur in my ears: *Tibi dabo . . . tibi dabo . . .* Yes, that indeed is the place where the Sacred Heart of Jesus desires to be adored: on Mount Tibidabo."

Next day Don Bosco left Spain with never-to-be-forgotten memories in his grateful heart. Via Tarascon, where he received an improvised ovation at the station; Montpellier, where he was the guest of the Major Seminary; Valence, where he said Mass at the cathedral; and Grenoble, where an immense multitude awaited him at the church of St. Louis and bore him off in triumph when he departed, he regained Turin. His last journey ended in an apotheosis.

It was the harvest after much difficult sowing. Forty-five years of his apostolic life thus ended in universal acclamation. But all this left him unmoved. All the work he had done, all the hard toil, now crowned with such a consoling recompense, he regarded as due to Mary, the Help of Christians, and to her alone.

" The source of the benedictions raining down upon our toils and fructifying them," he kept on saying, " is to be found in that *Ave Maria,* said on December 8, 1841, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, in the choir of the church of St. Francis of Assisi, with little Garelli. I put my whole soul into it. On high, the Virgin hearkened to me, and, for half a century, she has done nothing but answer that humble prayer."

1 Tibi-dabo: *I will give Thee.* The mountain is now crowned with a great church dedicated to the Sacred Heart. It gets its curious name from an old Catalonian legend, that Satan transported our Lord thither, during the third temptation, in which he offered Him all the kingdoms of the world in return for an act of adoration. *Haec omnia TIBI DABO, si...* " All these I *will give Thee,* if... "

The last days

On May 16, two days after the consecration of the church of the Sacred Heart, Don Bosco desired, before leaving the Eternal City, to offer the Holy Sacrifice in it. This Mass, the only one that he celebrated in the new church, he said at the altar of Our Lady, Help of Christians. His secretary, Don Viglietti, was his assistant. More than fifteen times, during the Sacrifice, the holy veteran interrupted his Eucharistic offering. Never had he been so deeply moved.

" Don Bosco, why," asked his secretary, " were you so deeply stirred while saying Mass? You did nothing but weep."

" Because, during the whole of the Sacrifice, the dream I had, when nine years old, was vividly present to my mind. You know of that dream, which determined my whole life: the wicked little rascals sinning against our Lord, their turning into wild beasts, then their transformation into docile little lambs, the divine Shepherdess, and her counsels of kindness and gentleness. Again I remembered telling my mother and brothers of the dream next day; and the questions they asked me. One sentence above the rest continued ringing in my ears, that which the gentle Shepherdess uttered when I urged her to give me the key of the dream: *One day, in due time, you will understand.* That was sixty-two years ago. Now I understand."

The Saint had just seen a bird's-eye view of the field of work providentially committed to his care. God had indeed charged him with a unique mission. Fifty years had sufficed for its accomplishment; and now — to crown his happiness — it was being fulfilled in the heart of the Catholic Church, under the eyes of Peter, and in his service. The labourer could shed tears of gratitude: he saw, and understood.

He also saw that his days were hastening towards their close. His worn-out strength failed him at every step. He could walk no longer; he only dragged along, with the help of his Sons' arms. He merely stiffened his will for a final effort, and his heart beat with the same love, as young and fresh as ever, for the boys and lads for whom he had exhausted all his energies to the very last. " As long as any thread of life is left to me," he protested, " I will devote it to the spiritual and temporal good of my children."

He begged these Sons to keep true to his teaching. " Do you know," he wrote from Rome, " what the poor old man who has consumed his days in your service desires you to do? To console him by assuring him that you will do whatever he has taught you for your souls' good. You do not know how happy you are in having a Salesian House as your home. Before God I can declare this to you: It is enough for a young man to enter one of these dwellings for Mary, Help of Christians, to take him under her very special protection. Do not refuse me this joy, for I feel that the day is near when I shall have to leave you and go into eternity."

Nor was he mistaken. For at least three years science had passed sentence upon him. At Marseilles, in March, 1884, the famous Doctor Combal, Professor of Medicine at Montpellier, had been called in at the summons of Father Albera for a consultation on the case of Don Bosco. After a minute examination he said: " You have burnt away your life by working to excess. Your whole constitution is like a coat worn threadbare by too much use. For that there is no remedy, or very little indeed. For such a garment only the wardrobe can be recommended. You understand: rest must be complete."

" Well, Doctor, your remedy is just the only one I cannot take. The machine can't be stopped: there is too much work to do."

The machine went on as far as it could. But one day it had to stop. It was in November, 1887, the day after the Retreat at Valsalice, which he had meant to preside over despite his increasing exhaustion.

At the door of the House, as he was bidding the Director farewell, he said something which was not understood at the time.

" Now that we have determined to have the Scholasticate of Philosophy here for our young religious we shall see more of you, Don Bosco, shall we not? " asked Father Barberis.

"Yes," said he, with a suddenly grave and almost dreamy look: "Yes, I shall come up here; indeed, I shall stay here as Guardian."

As he said this he gazed fixedly at the wide stairs that led from the terrace to the great courtyard. In spirit he was looking at the place where his grave was to be dug four months later.

Moreover, as he himself remarked a few days afterwards, it was time for him to go: the Salesian Congregation had men ready to take the oars and tiller in hand. It was now growing, and what a blessing it was!

The religious numbered 768, the novices 267. In the Old World they counted 38 Houses, in the New 26. Yesterday their Superior Chapter had decided on foundations in London and at Quito; and tomorrow, in the church of Our Lady, Help of Christians, Don Bosco himself was to clothe four new religious from three different quarters; two Poles, Prince Czartoryski and Father Grabelski; one Frenchman, Father Noguier de Malijay; and an Englishman, Father Johnson. "Our congregation is guided by God and protected by the Virgin Mary, Help of Christians," declared the Founder before he died.

And events did but confirm the truth of his declaration.

It was on December 3 that Don Bosco had to give up saying Mass. Until then, he said it in his private oratory, close to his room, when he was so exhausted that he could not turn round for the *Dominus vobiscum*, and he had to sit down after the communion, while a priest gave the Eucharist to the few who were admitted. Now he was no longer able to do that. He therefore had to assist at a Mass celebrated by his secretary and make his Communion then.

Yet the first days of December brought three great joys.

On December 6, at the church of Our Lady, Help of Christians, there was a new departure of missionaries, the twelfth since 1875. Don Bosco went down to preside at the ceremony. With the support of his secretary, he took his place in the sanctuary during Don Bonetti's sermon. The most eloquent preaching was surely that of the poor old man dragging himself into church to bless the new apostles of the Indians at Ecuador. The whole congregation stood up to see him.

After Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament and a few farewell words to the missionaries from the auxiliary Bishop of Turin, the scene became moving to the last degree. One by one the missionaries filed

past Don Bosco, saluted him and kissed his hand. All were deeply moved. When, after the departure of the young apostles, the passage was clear, the faithful flung themselves into the choir, and begged the good Father's blessing; then, going out of the church with him, the crowd made a procession of honour to the staircase of his room, mingling their cheers with those of the boys who had run to their Father on his way.

The missionaries for Quito had no sooner left than Mgr. Cagliero arrived from America. On December 7, at two in the afternoon, he was at the Oratory. The first interview between the Bishop and Don Bosco was a touching one. The good old man received his well-beloved Son in his room; he embraced him with effusion, pressed him to his heart and tears ran down his cheeks. After having kissed the pastoral ring, he asked his usual question: "How is your health?" as soon as he could get the words out.

It was no idle question that day. The missionary Bishop had just come from a long journey. On a pastoral tour at the foot of the Cordilleras he had lately had a dreadful fall from his horse, which had broken two of his ribs and put his life in danger. Yet he had never despaired; for, when his fever had been at its highest, a mysterious voice had constantly whispered in his ear: "Go to Turin to be present at Don Bosco's death."

And he had come.

On the evening of the same day there arrived at Valdocco the popular Bishop of Liége, the workman's great friend, Mgr. Doutreloux. It was an interested visit, for he wanted at all costs to get some Salesians for one of the most populous quarters of his eager city.

Next day, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, Don Bosco, whose health was still getting worse, nevertheless stuck firmly to his idea of going down to the refectory with his community. Though at first he refused, he had at last to accept the support of the Bishop's arm. At the end of the meal, Mgr. Doutreloux wanted to accompany him again to his room. This time he failed, and the humility of the priest overcame the filial affection of the prelate. This was the last time that Don Bosco shared a community meal with his Sons.

One by one all the little human pleasures were withdrawn from him by his increasing weakness. Thus it was that he had to renounce his afternoon drives. His last excursion was made on December 20.

On December 16 he had made a tour with Don Rua and his secretary. That evening he had shown himself unusually gay and lively. During the whole of the drive he had done nothing but quote his favourite authors, Latin, or Italian analysing them with much charm. His companions made constant mention of the freshness of his memory at the age of seventy-three, an old man overwhelmed with infirmities. As they were on their way back to the Oratory they saw Cardinal Alimonda. The venerable Archbishop came up at once and called out: " Oh, Don Bosco, Don Bosco! " He then got into the carriage, took the old priest into his arms and embraced him tenderly. A respectful crowd quickly gathered round. " How they love one another! " remarked the onlookers.

Three days afterwards Don Bosco wanted to have another drive. But this time he had to be borne down in an armchair. When the drive was over, a stranger stopped the carriage close to the Square of Mary, Help of Christians. He introduced himself to Don Bosco as one of his old pupils. He came from Pinerolo, and being on his way through Turin, he wanted to greet his old master. To make sure of catching him he had been on the watch for his carriage at the Square.

" How are you getting on, my child? " asked Don Bosco.

" Well, pretty fairly; but things might be better."

" And your soul; what about that? "

" I am just trying to be always a worthy son of Don Bosco."

"Bravo! God will reward you. And you, too, must always pray for me."

And after blessing him the Father bade him farewell, saying: " I commend my soul's salvation to you. Always live like a good Christian."

A few yards further on, the poor old man left his carriage, and was almost borne by his Sons up to his room. He thus ascended the staircase for the last time.

The last consolation he had was to attend to souls at the time of his receptions or at the confessional. But this office of counsellor, guide, doctor and father was also to be taken from him.

Until December 20, after hearing Mass and receiving Communion in bed, he had himself dressed, and, sitting on a little sofa in his room, he received visitors. That year they were specially numerous, being brought to Turin by the Jubilee of Leo XIII. Thus through the little room filed the Duke of Norfolk, Cardinal Goossens, Archbishop of Mechlin, Mgr.

Richard Archbishop of Paris, the Archbishop of Cologne, and many pilgrims from France, Belgium, Canada, Switzerland, Poland, Germany, Chile, Brazil and the Argentine.

It was now fully forty years since Don Bosco had thus devoted his whole morning to blessing, comforting, helping and advising all comers. Though now confined to his armchair and tormented with the infirmity that bent him almost double, he always dominated his visitors. " I have had to deal with the greatest sovereigns," once said a great citizen of Liége, M. Bégasse, " yet I have never felt overawed. But in Don Bosco's presence I have felt small."

And still it was on December 23, hardly a month before his death, that this faithful friend of the Salesians paid his visit to the Servant of God. He found his body in ruins, but his soul as fervent as ever. Here is this caller's testimony: " The failing strength of the venerable old man made it impossible for him to hold himself up. As I entered he raised his head which was bent down, and I could see that his eyes were rather dim, but still full of intelligence and kindness. Don Bosco spoke French perfectly; his voice was deliberate and showed some effort, but he expressed himself with remarkable clearness. He welcomed me with a Christian simplicity that was both dignified and warm-hearted. What deeply touched me was to encounter in an almost dying old man, constantly beset with visitors, such a sympathetic interest, so genuinely extended towards all comers. With what feeling did he speak to me of the Bishop of Liége and his zeal for workingmen's associations! In Don Bosco the sword has worn out the sheath, but energy of soul still animates his weak body! "

This was probably one of the last interviews he ever granted.

For several years his infirmities had prevented him from hearing confessions every morning as he used to do; but he still gave up Wednesdays and Saturdays to that ministry. Actually on Saturday, December 17, thirty penitents, pupils of the higher classes, old enough to make a serious examination of their vocation, urgently begged his secretary to let them in. In vain did he tell them of their Father's too unsatisfactory condition for receiving them: they showed that they were determined to go in nevertheless.

Being informed by his secretary, Don Bosco at first thought that the work was beyond his strength, but after a moment's reflection he

answered as if he were speaking to himself: " Yet this is the last time I can hear their confessions." In spite of this answer, the secretary objected that the invalid suffered too much from fever and oppression; but Don Bosco insisted: " Still it is the last time. So tell them to come in." And he heard their confessions.

And, indeed, these were the last that he heard.

During all the sharp sufferings of the last two months, the good old man seems to have been possessed with the thought of the Missions. He spoke of little else.

On December 23, at half-past twelve, three Belgian Catholics asked to see him. He agreed, provided that they promised to pray for him. After giving them his blessing, he said to them: " Promise to pray for me, for the Salesians, and specially for the missionaries."

Several times he spoke of this permanent anxiety to Bishop Cagliero: " Do not fail to tell M.L. — to remember our missionaries. Announce this everywhere: that helping on Missions is the infallible means of obtaining from Mary, Help of Christians, the graces they desire."

One evening, on December 27, he received Father Tinetti, the editor of the *Unitá Cattolica*, and said to him in a faint voice: " As in the past, I recommend to you the Salesian Congregation and our Missions." Another day, when he was very ill, he sent for Don Rua and Bishop Cagliero and gave them some last advice, ending with this promise: " I shall always remember the good our Co-operators and their families have done our Missions."

To the missionary Bishop who was going to Rome to pay his homage to the Sovereign Pontiff he gave this commission: " You have thoroughly grasped, have you not, the reason why the Holy Father should protect our Missions? Wherever Salesians are at work their principal care is to uphold the authority of Peter's Chair." And then, reckoning on the coming conquests of his young missionaries, he added: " Confidence, confidence! With the Pope's protection you will go into Africa, you will cross it, you will enter into Asia, Mongolia and many other places."

He knew that these surprising and rapid conquests would be due to the Queen of Apostles, whose cultus they were to preach: " Propagate devotion to Our Lady, Help of Christians, in Tierra del Fuego," said he. " If you only knew how many souls she means to gain for heaven by means of the Salesians! "

Lastly, four days before he died, when he was very exhausted, he only had strength enough to murmur in a weak voice to Bishop Cagliero, who was kneeling at the foot of his bed: " Save many souls in your Missions."

However, outside the House, at Turin, in Italy, all over the world, unceasing prayers were offered to secure the miracle that surpassed all hopes.

In many Salesian Houses daily and nightly adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was organised. The Salesian Co-operators everywhere used every form of filial piety to keep Don Bosco in this world. All the faithful who were united spiritually with the Saint through his apostolic enterprises did their best in the heavenly assault.

Papers in all countries published daily bulletins of the health of the eminent invalid sent by their " own correspondents. " The Oratory was constantly besieged by multitudes eager for news. Telegrams came in at every moment. At the Oratory of the Sacred Heart in Rome there was an incessant going to and fro of Princes, Prelates, Bishops and Cardinals, asking for the latest news. Even the Holy Father himself sent for information.

All the Salesian Houses experienced a similar influx. At Barcelona three news agencies had to be established. At Paris Ménilmontan Institute, through Don Bosco's illness, made its work better and better known.

One morning a lady of high rank in Turin enquired for the last bulletin of the sick Founder. The concierge of the House gave her the *Unità Cattolica,* which noted an amelioration. She gave her purse to the porter with tears of joy, saying: " Tell Don Bosco to get well quickly, and give him this offering. " It contained twenty louis in gold.

The beloved invalid kept on asking the doctors to tell him plainly how he was, because, he added: " Be sure that I do not fear anything. I am at peace and quite ready. "

He had reviewed his final departure with as much calmness as assurance.

Don Albera, Superior of the Oratory of St. Leo at Marseilles, said to him: " This is the third time, Don Bosco, that you have reached the borders of eternity. The prayers of your Sons have always brought you back to this world. I am sure it will be the same once more. "

" This time, I shall not come back," replied the Saint.

He expressed the same thought when he was taking off his things after his last drive at Turin.

" Now I have nothing left beyond making a good end."

" But, Don Bosco," answered his secretary, " you will find that a little rest will do your illness good."

" No, no," he persisted. " I have only to make a good end."

" Besides," he sometimes added, " I want to go to heaven, for there I shall be able to work much better for my children. On earth I can do nothing more for them."

Sometimes they begged him to ask God for health; but he would not consent to that. His reply was always the same: " Let it be with me according to the holy will of God."

Such ejaculations as were suggested to him he would repeat with fervour; but if they whispered to him: " Most Holy Virgin Mary, cure me," he held his tongue. It was quite clear that Don Bosco had no illusions as to the issue of his illness.

In that he was of the same opinion as his doctors, whose view was expressed by Doctor Fissore in these words: " Don Bosco is done for. There is no hope now of saving him. A heart affection is undermining him: his liver is attacked; his spinal marrow reveals a complication giving rise to paralysis of the lower limbs. He cannot speak any more. Lastly, his kidneys are working badly, and his lungs are still worse. His malady can be traced to no direct cause. His life is being worn out by constant work mingled with continual anxieties. He is not dying of any disease. He is like a lamp dying for want of oil."

The sick man knew it very well; and that is why he asked all his visitors to help him, as he said, to save his poor soul. This prayer he even addressed to his venerated Archbishop, who came to visit him on his sickbed before leaving for his journey *ad limina.*

" But you ought not to fear death, dear Don Bosco," said Cardinal Alimonda to him. " You have so often recommended others to be ready."

" I have told others, your Eminence, and now I need others to tell me."

That evening, on December 23, about five o'clock, came his confessor and fellow-pupil at the Seminary, Father Giacomelli. They were left together for a few moments. What a recollection brought this good

priest to him! In the course of a dangerous illness which he had in 1885 the Saint said to him: " Don't be afraid, dear friend. Don't you know that it is you who will help Don Bosco in his last moments? "

On December 24, at half-past seven, all was ready for the administration of the Viaticum. Don Bosco, with tears in his eyes, said to the priests around him: " Help me, all of you, to receive my God well . . . I am in confusion . . . *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.*" When he saw Bishop Cagliero bringing the ciborium his tears flowed still more freely. What a spectacle! Don Bosco, clothed in a stole, looked like an angel. The moment was indescribable. Even the Bishop could not restrain his tears.

At eleven o'clock that morning Bishop Cagliero administered Extreme Unction. Don Bosco had already asked them to get the Holy Father to give his blessing. Implored by the missionary Bishop, it came on the evening of the next day, which was Christmas: *Holy Father, afflicted by Don Bosco's illness, prays for him and sends him requested benediction — Cardinal Rampolla.*

The certainty of approaching death, the suffering of his poor paralysed body, the increasing exhaustion of his strength did not, however, diminish his presence of mind or good humour in any way.

In the rare moments of respite left him by his malady, between two crises, he went on giving signs of mental alertness quite inexplicable in the state in which he was. Almost always after waking up from drowsiness, which often lasted whole days, or after some sudden faintness, he would show a wonderful vivacity and appositeness in speaking of some step to be taken, of some legal procedure to be followed, which had perhaps been overlooked, and of many a delicate affair the clearing up of which involved a touch of his skilled experience. The doctors could not account for his marvellous lucidity of mind and extraordinary activity.

They also admired the gentle patience of their invalid and his perpetual smile. To the very end of his life Don Bosco kept up his good-humour; his cheerfulness seemed to grow in such a way as to mislead those who were about him.

One day he would make a Piedmontese quatrain of banter as to the unfitness of his legs for walking; another, he would say to one of his Sons who was carrying him from one place to another: " Put it down

on the bill: I will settle everything up at last; " or again, he would ask his secretary for an iced coffee, adding: " Mind, it must be burning hot." And once, when he was suffering atrociously from oppression, he asked: " Can't any of you tell me of a good bellows maker? "

" Why, Don Bosco? "

" For a new pair of lungs. Mine are not worth a farthing."

" We are giving you a good deal of suffering, dear Don Bosco," the infirmarian remarked, after changing his bed.

" Oh! you may well say that," said the good Father, with a smile.

And to the very end, until his last hour of death, he preserved this liveliness of spirit.

Only one thought could sadden him, that of the final separation, and this tore his fatherly heart: " The one sacrifice I shall have to make, at the moment of death, is that of leaving you."

The moment, as they thought during the early days of January, must have been postponed by the prayers and sacrifices of his children. A sensible improvement was perceived, which astonished the doctors and even the invalid himself. His digestion began to function again, and Don Bosco's food seemed to make him regain his strength to some extent.

" Can any one explain," he asked, " how a person, who has been in bed for twenty-eight days, almost without food and excessively weak, can suddenly regain self-possession, take everything in, feel strong, and able, if required, to get up, write and work? Yes, I am now as fit as if I had never been ill. If anyone wants to know why, only one answer could be given: *Quod Deus imperio, tu prece, Virgo, potes.* — *" What God can work by power, thou, O Virgin, canst work by prayer."*

This unexpected relief, obtained by the supplications of his Sons all over the world, enabled the Saint in all quietude to make his arrangements and to give his last directions.

In order that death, when it came, might find him in entire poverty, he one day said to his secretary: " Take my pocketbook and purse out of my soutane, and if there is anything in them, take it to Don Rua. I want to die so poor that they may say: Don Bosco died without leaving a halfpenny."

Such voluntary poverty was associated in his mind with the actual destitution of his House, which forced him to utter the following com-

plaint: " How I regret not being able to come to the rescue, as I used to do. I have now nothing left, and yet my children still are crying out for bread. What are we to do? Let it be made known: Those who want to show any charity to Don Bosco and his poor boys must not wait for me to go round and hold out my hand to them. I shall not be able to do it any more."

The news of this amelioration in Don Bosco's condition reached the ears of the Holy Father, who rejoiced at it.

" I have heard that your Founder has been very ill," he said in a public audience at which the Salesians were presented to him: " is it true that he is now rather better? "

" Yes, Holy Father," replied the Salesian who was being questioned. " Don Bosco is on his way towards recovery."

" Oh, God be praised! " exclaimed the Pontiff. " Pray for your Father's preservation. Tell him that the Pope is thinking of him, and sends him his apostolic benediction. Don Bosco's life is precious, and his death, were it to come now, would deeply sadden Our festival in Rome."

On the threshold of eternity, towards which, despite his temporary improvement, he was hastening, he made use of every opportunity to leave his final recommendations to his Sons.

Fastening his regard upon the future of his Congregation, which he thought radiant, and overflowing with confidence, he said: *Until now we have always gone forwards without fail; we cannot go wrong. Mary is our guide.* To stress the sort of relationship that ought to bind together the Superiors and subjects in his House, he gave this order to his secretary: " Viglietti, as soon as you get back, write down this: *Let Salesian Superiors always show great kindness to their inferiors. Above all, let them treat the servants with charity.*" To all the Salesians, he left this as his last order and final command: *Work! Work!*

Much the same charge did he give to the Sisters of Mary, Help of Christians, who had come to greet him in the person of their Superior General: *Let them do all they can to save many souls.*

One evening, to Don Rua and Mgr. Cagliero, he gave this order to be transmitted to all his religious: *Treat one another as brothers; love one another; bear with one another. The assistance of Mary, Help of Christians, will never be wanting to you.*

The evening before New Year's Day, Don Rua, as usual, asked the good Father what mementos he would send to the boys: *Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and frequent Communion*, he repeated for the hundredth time. He had spent his whole life in driving these two great means of salvation into the heads and hearts of thousands of young folks who had passed through his hands.

As they told him that even socialist and radical newspapers were speaking of him with sympathy and repect, he recalled the evangelical idea that had inspired all his action and had raised him above all political disputes: *Let us do good to all, and never any evil to anyone.*

Quite at the end of his life, first in full lucidity, afterwards in a moment of delirium, he gave the secret of his fruitful activity, and of his utter and dauntless faith in God: *Pray, yes,* said he one evening to his Sons, *but with faith, with a living faith.* On seeing, in his fever, some unknown check in the conquering advance of his Sons, *Courage!* — he exclaimed — *Courage! Avanti! Sempre avanti!*

The last word, lucid, deliberate, with his whole heart in it, that fell from his lips, was for his boys, in whose service he had consumed all his days: *Tell the boys I am awaiting them in heaven. When you speak or preach always insist upon frequent Communion and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

The Host and the Virgin Mary! Strength and Purity!

Heaven at the end of the journey. But, not to leave the paths that lead to it, arm your human weakness with this twofold buckler: the Eucharist and the protection of the Blessed Virgin. Such, from the very edge of the grave, was the legacy of this great teacher to the young whom he had loved so much!

He said this on January 28. On the next day, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, he made his last Communion, after which he fell into a mixture of insensibility and delirium which lasted till the evening.

A month earlier, he had foreseen his condition. He had scarcely been two days in bed, when Don Rua came to ask him for a dispensation from a certain obligation, and he answered: " I give it you until the day of St. Francis de Sales. If you need it after that, you must get it renewed by such-and-such a confrere."

The feeling of gratitude was as strong as ever in this broken old man after his two months' serious illness. He often mentioned, in a

tone of singular affection, the names of the principal benefactors of his Oratories. One of them had a son gravely ill: " Well," he said to him, " I mean all the prayers actually made for me to be applied to your son for the restoration of his health."

During the day he said to his secretary: " When I cannot speak any more, if anyone comes to ask for my blessing, rise my hand and make the sign of the cross with it, with the appropriate words. I will add my intention."

When he was drowsy, he seemed not to understand unless heaven and spiritual things were spoken of, and then he bowed his head or finished any prayer that had been begun. Thus, while Don Bonetti said: *Maria, Mater gratiae, tu nos ab hoste protege . . .* the invalid would continue: *Et mortis hora suscipe.* All day long we heard him saying: *Mother! Mother! . . . Tomorrow! Tomorrow!* And about six in the evening, he said in a low voice: *Jesus! . . . Jesus! . . . Mary! . . . Mary! . . . Jesus and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul . . . In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum . . . O Mother! . . . Mother! . . . Open the gate of Paradise for me!*

He often joined his hands and slowly repeated the maxims of Holy Scripture which were the rule of his whole life: *Diligite . . . diligite inimicos vestros . . . Benefacite his qui vos persequuntur . . . Quaerite regnum Dei . . . Et a peccato meo . . . peccato meo . . . munda . . . munda me.*

When the evening *Angelus* rang, Don Bonetti invited him to salute the Blessed Virgin with a *Viva Maria,* and Don Bosco repeated it with joy. A little later, he turned to Enria, an old member of his religious family, who for the last two months had spent every night with our beloved Father, and said in a weak voice: " say . . ." as if he wanted to say a few words to his faithful friend; and then, feeling his impotence to articulate any more, he added: " but . . . but . . . I thank you . . ."

Then he said an act of contrition, followed with a repetition of *Miserere nostri, Domine.*

For several hours he frequently raised his arms heavenwards, with joined hands, saying: " Thy holy will be done! " As the whole of his right side became gradually paralysed, the dying man continued to make a gesture of resignation with his left arm, repeating as well as he could: " Thy will be done! "

He had entirely lost all use of speech: but in order to renew the offering of his life as often as possible, during the whole of the following day and all night he used such little strength as he had left in constantly raising his left hand. And this dumb offering was an edifying spectacle.

On the dawn of the next day it was plain that the hours of the dying man were numbered. The doctors, too, did not conceal the fact that all would be over either that night or, at least, before daybreak next morning.

Then Don Rua took the reins of government in hand. His first act was to summon to the deathbed of their Father all his children, that they might see him alive for the last time and thus bid him a final farewell.

They met in silent groups in his private Oratory, and entered the death chamber of the Saint one after another. He lay there upon his bed, with his head slightly bent down on his right shoulder and raised up on three pillows. His face looked calm, not at all emaciated, and almost young; his eyes were half-closed; his hands rested on the coverlet. On his breast was a crucifix; at his feet a violet stole, the token of his priestly dignity.

Deeply moved by the distressing sight, his Sons walked on tiptoe, knelt at the bedside of the dying man, and imprinted a kiss of veneration on his protecting hand. They filed past in hundreds through that little room, for they had come there from all points of the compass. Then came the turn of the two highest classes and of the oldest apprentices. This scene of filial affection lasted throughout the day.

Meanwhile there came from Ecuador a telegram announcing the happy arrival at Guayaquil of the Salesian missionaries who had started two months and a half earlier. Don Rua hastened to communicate the good news to Don Bosco, who appeared to understand it. In fact, he opened his eyes and raised them heavenwards as if in thanksgiving.

At a quarter to two in the morning, Don Bosco began his agony. Don Rua, his Vicar, took the stole and went on with the prayers for the dying. The chief Superiors were summoned in haste, and soon, in the little cell of the dying man, about thirty Salesians were gathered together, priests, clerics and laymen, all assembled round him.

Then leaning down to the ear of their beloved Father, Don Rua said to him in a stifled voice: " Don Bosco, we are here, we your Sons. We beg you to forgive us for any trouble we have given you: as a sign of your forgiveness and paternal goodwill, once more give us your blessing. I will guide your hand and say the words."

What a heart-rending scene! Everyone is prostrate, and Don Rua, gathering all the strengh left him by the anguish of the moment, utters the words of the benediction while raising Don Bosco's paralysed hand to call down the protection of Our Lady, Help of Christians, on the Salesians present, and on those scattered all over the world.

About 3.00 a.m. came a telegram from Rome as follows: *Holy Father gives from the bottom of his heart Apostolic Benediction to Don Bosco gravely ill. — Cardinal Rampolla.*

The Bishop had already begun the *Proficiscere.*

At 4.30 a.m. the *Angelus* rang in the church of Our Lady, Help of Christians, and all present recited it round the bed. Then Don Bonetti suggested an ejaculatory prayer to the dying man. All at once the weak rattle in the throat which had been going on for the last hour and a half, ceased, and, for a moment, the breathing became regular and peaceful. It was only for a brief space, and the last breath died away: *Don Bosco is dying!* cried Don Belmonte. Bishop Cagliero was completing the last prayer:

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you!

The dying man uttered three almost inaudible sighs: Don Bosco was dead. His age was 72 years, 5 months, and 15 days. It was 4.45 a.m.

A great Servant of God had just returned to his Master.

Poor he had lived, poor he had died. The only heritage he had left his Sons was the most utter denudation. On the day of his departure, the Oratory of Turin, with its eight hundred mouths to feed, was absolutely penniless, and the baker had to be asked to supply the bread on credit.

Hardly had the town been informed, by two or three special editions of the papers, of the death of the Saint, than it poured into the Valdocco district to venerate his remains. About two in the afternoon, the crowd was already laying siege to the conciergerie of the Salesian Oratory and asking to be allowed to file past the corpse.

In face of this enormous and unexpected affluence, means had to be found to satisfy the numbers who were eager to gaze for the last time on the features of the apostle of the lowly.

The church of St. Francis de Sales was quite appropriate for the purpose. There the deceased was carried, vested in violet and his crucifix clasped in his hands. Seated in an armchair raised a few steps above the sanctuary, there was Don Bosco, in a sleeping attitude, with calm, natural, and almost smiling features. After twenty-four hours, death had set no stamp upon his face.

When the doors of the church were opened to admit the public, the whole of the great city may be said to have flocked to venerate the holy remains. The Corso Regina Margherita and Via Valdocco were black with people and full of a train of private carriages or public conveyances.

All classes of society met together. Up to ten o'clock, they were the small shopkeepers; from eleven till two, the noble families; in the afternoon and the evening, there were the big merchants, the magistrates, the comfortable families and the State officials.

It was reckoned that there were over forty thousand who filed past the remains of this humble priest.

On the evening of that day occurred the last farewell of the Sons to their Father.

About nine o'clock, all the children of the House gathered in the little church where the sacred remains were exposed. How many memories were attached to these walls!

There was the pulpit in which, for eighteen years, his word with such inconceivable power had charmed their souls. At that altar, for how many years had he celebrated Holy Mass with such simple, deep and tender devotion, with a confidence that obtained everything, but without the least external manifestation of the wonderful graces with which his soul was inundated. And behind that altar was the confessional, where so many brows had been uplifted and absolved. How many hearts had there found pardon, strength and consolation! How many a will had been restored to fight again and defy the wrong!

On their knees, the eight hundred lads said their evening prayer, the prayer taught them by Don Bosco. And then, in the deepest silence, Father Francesia spoke a few words to console them — the orphan family.

" Before we part with him for ever," he concluded, " in this church in which Don Bosco sacrified himself for you, what can I do but remind you of the last word he has left to us: *Tell my children that I am waiting for them all in Paradise.*"

Don Bosco, in the serenity of death, seemed to be blessing his family gathered round him once more. It proved difficult, indeed, to lead the boys away to their dormitories. Motionless and deeply touched, they seemed to hear nothing else, and could not make up their minds to leave the Father whom they would never see again on earth.

The funeral of Don Bosco, on February 2, was a wonderful triumph. It was calculated that there were more than a hundred thousand persons present. This son of the people, this benefactor of the people, received from the people on that day the highest mark of veneration and love that any monarch could dream of.

Four days later, on February 6, at five in the evening, a completely private ceremony brought together at Valsalice, just outside Turin, the chosen Sons of the great apostle, the Salesians, the daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, the Salesian Co-operators, the old boys and the younger pupils of the Salesian Oratory.

They came to bury their Father in intimacy. In the exact spot on which he had four months earlier set his eyes so persistently, at the centre of the wide staircase leading from the courtyard of the building to the terrace, a tomb was ready and waiting. Into it they slid the triple coffin.

Then the missionary Bishop spoke.

" Just as the first Christians, prostrate upon the tombs of the martyrs, learned how to fight for the Faith; just as St. Philip Neri, descending daily into the dust of the Catacombs, learned how to become the Apostle of Rome, so will we pilgrims come to this resting-place of Don Bosco, here to beg light and strength, guidance in directing, energy in prosecuting the Christian life, love for the brotherhood, devotion to every great cause."

Never were words so pregnant with prophecy!

Epilogue

What a task Don Bosco achieved in forty-six years! He has been compared with St. Vincent de Paul — and rightly. Like him, he founded two Congregations, and a Third Order as well; like him, he was involved in religious and political events of the first rank; like him, he dreamt of far-off Missions; and he was also a builder of churches, a great pressman, who issued the first tract, the first almanac, and even the first pocket novel for Catholics. And all this work was done as a side line to his principal undertaking: the maintenance and education of thousands of the children of the people.

What an understanding of his times he showed in all his enterprises. Saints, it has been said, go beyond and proceed more quickly than their contemporaries; they anticipate new ideas; their rules are adopted as the maxims to tomorrow. Don Bosco was among the foremost of such forerunners.

He was a quarter of a century ahead with his first efforts, which were thought daring at the time of their initiation. In Italy he began the apostolate of the press: he is the true founder of holiday colonies; he opened up new paths in teaching; in devotion he made bold innovations by returning to the earliest traditions; of the great and threatening evils of the apprentice system he brought the effective remedy of technical schools; in the political sphere he desired the reconciliation of Church and State in Italy, and his endeavours indirectly laboured to bring it about.

These fresh paths, this open war with old routine, aroused much fierce opposition: and it beset him from all quarters. From hell, of course; from men in power: that was only to be expected, for his zeal was raising a generation which was to thwart their work of laicisation; and also — as Pius XI has said — from the very people who ought to have come to his assistance, because his new rules set at nought the superannuated methods of those who sometimes represented the Church.

Happily — how could he otherwise have triumphed? God fought with him, God and the Virgin Mary, by whom he was sent. A saint, indeed, is one of God's gifts to the world, a special gift with a special mission, the bearer of some " Thus saith the Lord " to some period of unsettlement. He comes, and sometimes by example, sometimes by wonderful undertakings, sometimes by both example and word together, he shows clearly God's mind as to the dangers that are menacing society, as to what is most urgently needed, as to the direction Catholic activity must resolutely enter upon.

Don Bosco's definite mission was to snatch the young of the people from the enemies of their happiness, from ignorance, poverty, vice, lawlessness, technical incapacity and isolation, and to shelter them in Oratories which could provide them with the instruction that enlightens, the doctrine that changes the heart, the accepted discipline that tempers the will, the teaching that prepares boys for life, and the family atmosphere that expands the soul. One by one, all the undertakings of the Saint sprang from this fundamental anxiety.

Sent by God for the salvation of the young, such, indeed, was this man, who, unlike the man in the Gospel, showed that he was a prophet in his own country and reaped among his own people the harvest which he had sown in their field.

The Bible tells us of the early patriarchs who drew themselves up as they passed through some field which their labour had tilled. Showing the heavy and thick ears of corn stretching farther than eye could see, they cried out gladly and proudly: *Odor agri pleni* " the smell of a plentiful field! "

This odour of the ripe harvest St. John Bosco inhaled to the full before leaving this world. Whoever could have told little Michael Rua when, on March 25, 1855, he confidently took service with his master, that one day — on January 31, 1888 he would come into the inheritance

that included sixty-four religious Houses scattered throughout two Continents, and nearly eight hundred religious? At that time, there only remained one inalienable piece of family property: holy poverty.

In reply to certain malevolent charges, the Saint once drew up a statistical table of those pupils in his Houses whom he had brought on their way at least as far as the priesthood: there were nearly two thousand of them.

Next to that list another might have been displayed, that of thousands of the heathen brought by his Sons to the Faith on the dreary waste near the South Pole in far-off Tierra del Fuego. There, in the Land's End of the world, they had set their tents and were gladly gathering in souls to Christ. And with the same spiritual gladness, his Sons and Daughters, in Europe and America, were raising in their Oratories, boarding schools, technical or professional schools, workrooms, family hostels, a whole world of young folks, eager and "*shamelessly* Christian," as Veuillot said, and they would be found ready when the time came. At Don Bosco's death, these Old Boys already made an army. No basilica would have been large enough to hold all these spiritual Sons of his, all these children whom he had spent himself in bringing up in the school of Christ.

Before his departure from this life this great soul also knew the joy of seeing the triumph in the lives of his men and women religious, of a rule of sanctification and of a method of education which were dear to him. They had come straight from his mind and heart.

The ascetic doctrine which plays so large a part in the sanctification of work, the educational system which gives so much credit to human goodness, were two real audacities, one might almost call them two innovations. This was to be seen, indeed, in the resistance offered to them, in the endless criticisms that assailed them, in the persecutions they had to endure. But, long before 1888, the game was already won. First of all, success, and then Rome, had smiled, with favour in these ventures.

Rome saw clearly that the modern thing about this vigorous tree was only its bark. As deeply as any other did it thrust down its roots into the soil of tradition. In Don Bosco's soul there was as much of the past as of the future. He might, indeed, with his abridged rule of the religious life, look like an innovator, at bottom he was someone's son:

through St. Francis de Sales, his inspirer, he belonged to the Gospel: he was in the purest line of the Faith.

Neither prayer nor penance were banished from his plan of life: but, in an age of strange activity, too often feverish, both were identified with apostolic work in the service of souls. What a rough hairshirt is a life of unbroken work amidst the young! What prayer is more noble than that which, between two zealous efforts, raises its brow, offers its toil to God, begs for strength and energy for the next step, and then carries on!

Neither authority nor belief in original sin were excluded by his method of education. But in a world bitten with insubordination, and after more than three centuries of Jansenism, it made as much room as possible for human free will, it gave a large place to the life of the heart, and it showed its confidence in all that part of man's nature which original sin had only injured.

On that side this saintly soul, attached to tradition as it was, and running more quickly than the men of its time, showed how it also was sympathetically in full union with its contemporaries, the best tendencies of whom it faithfully interpreted.

Vetera novis augere: to increase the heritage of the past by the putting forth, on the age-long trunk of the Church, of the new branches demanded by the changes of society, such seems to have been the devices of the great apostle.

And his activity did not end with his burial. From the world beyond he continued to act by his undertakings, his writings and his Sons. What is far more, he went on acting himself, by obtaining from Heaven the graces for which his intercession was invoked.

No sooner was he interred than requests for relics flowed in. Towards his tomb, which Catholics had raised by public subscription, pilgrimages thronged. Near his coffin all the languages of the world were mingled. They were one in gratitude and desire.

Then the Church of Christ, moved by the marvels of which this tomb was the centre, seeing the high idea the Catholic world had formed of this man's sanctity, took his Cause into her own hands.

Two years had scarcely elapsed since Don Bosco's death, when the ecclesiastical tribunal of Turin, on June 4, 1890, began its enquiry into the life, virtues, miracles and writings of the Servant of God.

Seven years later, after 562 sittings, the diocesan process was finished, and its acts — contained in thirty-four folios of a thousand pages each — were forwarded to Rome on April 11, 1897.

The Congregation of Rites had the voluminous evidence minutely checked. The examination lasted ten years. It read every line written by Don Bosco, and thoroughly sifted the diocesan testimonials as to the virtues and miracles of the Servant of God. All these records, ruthlessly scrutinised, unanimously bore witness in favour of the great educator. Then, on July 23, 1907, Pius X gave permission for the introduction of his Cause to the Roman tribunals. This papal assent conferred upon Don Bosco, according to the terms of the old Canon Law, the title of Venerable.

Soon afterwards began the Apostolic Process, thus called because it takes place in the name of the Holy Father, the successor of Peter the Apostle.

Stage by stage, in twenty-two years, it reached its term.

On February 8, 1827, Pius XI presided over the General Congregation, which declared that Don Bosco had practised, to an heroic degree, the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, and the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.

On March 19, 1929, the same Pope promulgated the Decree which recognised as authentic and valid for the Beatification the two miracles chosen by the defenders of the Cause. Finally, on June 2, 1929, the little shepherd of Becchi was to be raised to the altars of the Church.

That day more than sixty thousand of the faithful invaded the Vatican Basilica. Salesian religious, Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, Co-operators, Old Boys, boys from Salesian Houses, had flocked together from far and near and filled the immense nave of St. Peter's.

When the Brief was read, declaring that *henceforward the title of Blessed could be given to the Venerable Servant of God, John Bosco,* the curtain which vailed the " glory of Bernini " fell away and the glorious image of Don Bosco appeared. The multitude then broke forth into unending cheers.

On June 18, 1930 by the decree SUPER DUBIO, the cause was reopened. Pope Pius XI approved the two miracles on November 19, 1933. Fourteen days later, on December 3, the decree DE TUTO which stated that the Canonization could now take place, was read.

In the pre-public consistory which took place in January 15, of the following year, the date of the canonization was fixed for Easter Sunday, April 1, 1934. That day also marked the conclusion of the Jubilee Year of the nineteenth centenary of the Redemption of the human race.

On the glorious Easter morning, Pope Pius XI, as Vicar of Jesus Christ and Successor St. Peter, by virtue of his authority as Teacher and Shepherd of the Universal Church, promulgated the decree by which the name of John Bosco, the humble shepherd boy of Becchi, the Founder of the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the giant of charity of the nineteenth century was inscribed in the catalogue of the Saints of the Catholic Church.

Catholic youth was acclaiming, now raising to Catholic altars, one of those who had loved them most, and whose teaching, example and prayer would continue to keep them for Christ.

And outside, in token of joy, accompanying the *Te Deum* now being chanted by thousands of voices, the bells of the Basilica, dominated by its powerful *bourdon*, scattered their deafening peal through the Eternal City.

Important dates

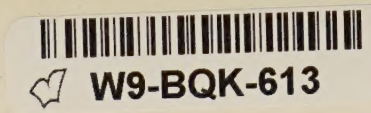
1815, August 16	Born
1815, August 17	Baptised
1824	First dream
1826, March 26	First Communion (Easter Sunday)
1833, August 4	Confirmation
1835, October 25	Clothing Ceremony
1835, October 30	Enters Major Seminary
1840, March 29	Tonsure and Minor Orders
1840, September 19	Subdeacon
1841, March 27	Deacon
1841, June 5	Priest
1841, June 6	First Mass
1841, November 3	Enters *Convitto*
1841, December 8	Meets Bartholomew Garelli
1841, August	Meets young Michael Rua
1846, April 12	Oratory finally settles at Pinardi House
1846 July	First dangerous illness
1846, November 3	Mother settles with him in Turin
1847, May	First boarder admitted
1851, February 19	Pinardi House bought
1852, June 20	Church of St. Francis de Sales blessed
1852, October 3	Don Rua receives the Cassock
1853, March	First issue of the Catholic Readings
1854, January 26	Don Bosco's helpers first called *Salesians*
1855, March 25	Don Rua's first private vows
1858	First journey to Rome
1862, May 14	Public vows of the twenty-two first *Salesians*
1864, July 23	Laudatory Decree granted to the Salesian Society

1868, June 9	Consecration of the Church of Mary Help of Christians
1869, March 1	Approbation of the Salesian Congregation
1871, December 7	Second dangerous illness
1874, April 3	Approbation of the Rules of the Society
1875, August 15	Meets Can. Giuseppe Sarto, future Pope St. Pius X
1875, November 11	First departure of Salesian missionaries
1875, November 28	At Nice, opening of the first Oratory outside Italy
1876, May 9	Extension to Salesian Co-operators of the indulgences of the Third Order of Franciscans
1882, October 24	Consecration of the Church of St. John the Evangelist
1883	Meets Achille Ratti, future Pope Pius XI
1884, May 14	Salesian Society granted the privileges accorded to the Redemptorists
1887, May 14	Consecration of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome
1887, December 11	Said last Mass
1888, January 29	Last communion
1888, January 31	Died: 4.45 a.m., at 72
1888, February 6	Buried at Valsalice
1890, June till	
1897, July 23	Process opened and closed
1907, July 28	John Bosco declared *Venerable*
1929, June 2	Beatification of John Bosco
1929, June 9	Transfer of his remains to the church of Mary Help of Christians
1934, April 1	Canonization: Easter Sunday
1946, March 25	Patron of the Catholic Publishers
1958, January 25	Patron Saint of Young Apprentices (Italy)
1959, May 2	Consecration of the Church of St. John Bosco in Rome
1959, May 3	Pope John XXIII venerates the remains of Don Bosco in the new Church

Important Events in England and Europe during his Lifetime

1814-'15	The Congress of Vienna: Battle of Waterloo
1815	Birth of Bismarck
1819-'20	Revolutions in Spain, Sicily, Germany.
1821	Suicide of Lord Castlereagh
1823	The Catholic Association (Daniel O'Connell)
1829	Passing of Catholic Emancipation
1830	Fall of Charles X in France
	Establishment of the July Monarchy
	Belgian Revolution
	Resignation of the Duke of Wellington
	The Whigs in power
1831	Charles Albert, King of Sardinia (Piedmont)
1832	The First Reform Bill
1833	Emancipation Act (Anti-slavery Bill)
	Keble's Sermon on the " National Apostasy "
	Birth of the Oxford Movement
1838	Coronation of Queen Victoria
1841	Sir Robert Peel, Prime Minister
1842	Death of Dr. Arnold of Rugby
1845	Irish Potato Famine: Conversion of Dr. Newman
1846	Repeal of the Corn Laws: Pius IX the ' liberal ' Pope
1848	The Year of Revolutions
	The Second Republic in France

1849	Flight of Pius IX to Gaeta
	The Fall of the Roman Republic
	Abdication of Charles Albert: accession of Victor
1850	Establishment of the Hierarchy in England
1851	The ' Coup d'Etat ' of Louis Napoleon in France
1852	Establishment of the Second Empire — Napoleon III
1854	Crimean War
	Declaration of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception
1856	The Peace of Paris
1859	Italian War of Independence against Austria
	Battles of Magenta and Solferino
1861	Death of Count Cavour
	Proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy
	Emancipation of the serfs in Russia
	Outbreak of the Civil War in United States
1864	Schleswig-Holstein War
1866	Austro-Prussian War: the Battle of Sadowa
1867	The ' Ausgleich ': the Dual Monarchy in Austria-Hungary
	Second Reform Bill
	Darwin's " Origin of Species "
	Karl Marx " Das Kapital " (in London)
1870	The Franco-Prussian War
	The Occupation of Rome: Pius IX, the ' Prisoner of the Vatican '
1871	The Paris Commune
	Proclamation of the German Empire at Versailles
1875	Proclamation of the Third Republic
1877	Russo-Turkish War
1878	The Congress of Berlin
	Accession of Leo XIII
1879	The Dual Alliance between Austria and Prussia
1886	First Home Rule Bill (Ireland)
1887	Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee
1890	The Fall of Bismarck
	Death of Cardinal Newman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